A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON

ARTHUR T. WALDEN

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A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON

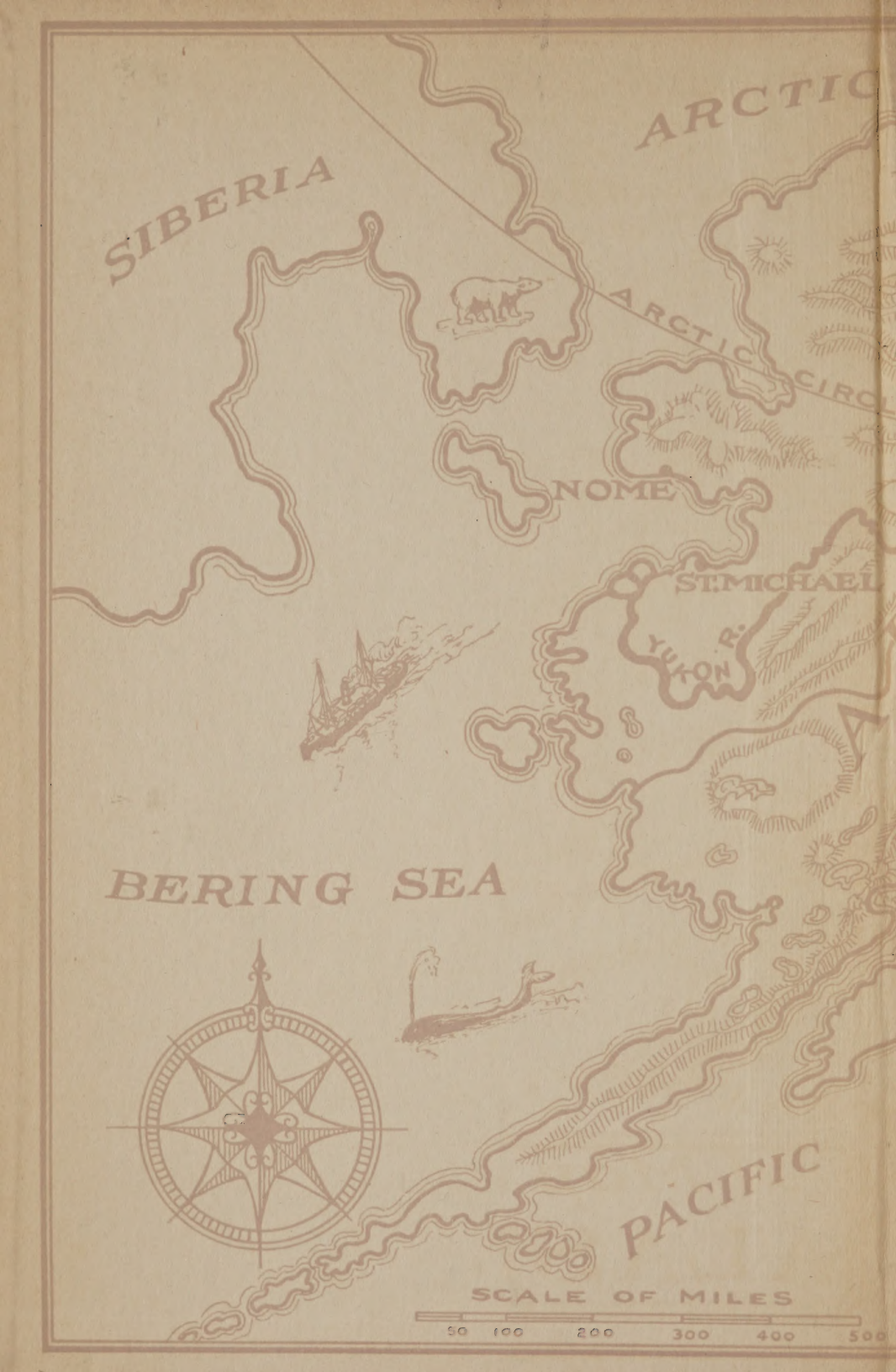
By Arthur Treadwell Walden

ARTHUR WALDEN, with Chinook and the other dogs of his sledge team, is known wherever winter sports hold the eager interest of men and women. Mr. Walden's picturesque adventures as a dog-driver began, however, years ago in circumstances where skillful work on the trail was not a matter of sport but of life or death.

In 1896, two years before the big gold rush to the Klondike, Mr. Walden went into the Yukon region, working as a dog-team freighter from the Chilkoot Pass to the Yukon, to Circle City, and to Dawson, and later to all the boom towns that the gold strike brought into sudden existence. Wherever he went he took with him a cool, human philosophy, which he has transferred to his book. Already an old-timer when the great rush was on, he saw the Cheechakos — greenhorns — come hurrying in the thousands, and he observed all the frenzy of the gold-seekers, the hardships, tragedies, and humors of the time, with a shrewdness and insight that makes delightful reading.

The season is not likely to produce a more colorful or entertaining biographical volume than this.

A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON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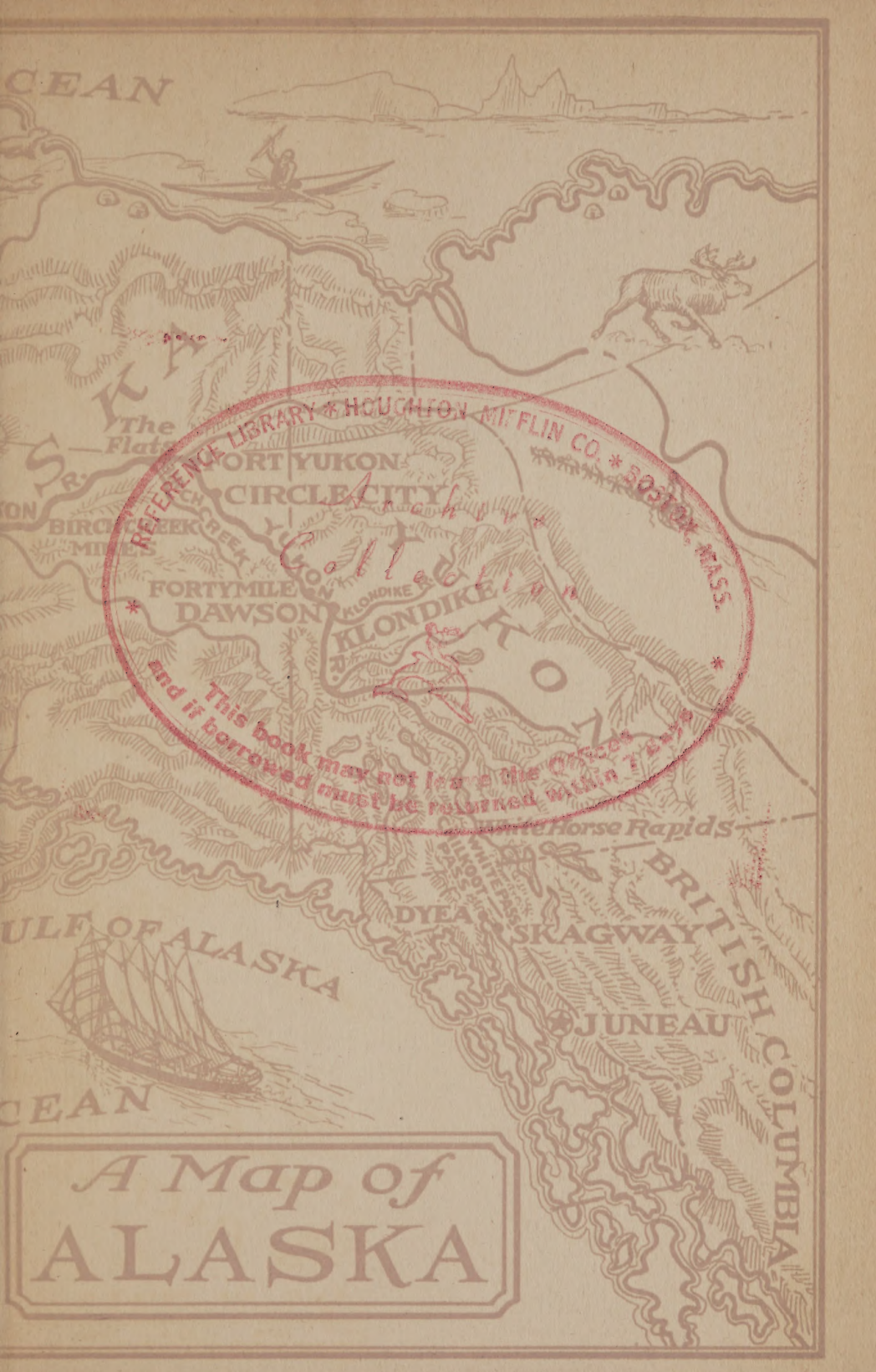

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A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON

THE AUTHOR AND HIS TEAM, DAWSON, 1898
The string are Hootchinoo, three-quarters timber wolf, leader; Ribbon; Chub; Brawn; Chic; Raleigh.

A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON

BY

ARTHUR TREADWELL WALDEN

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

WALTER COLLINS O'KANE

AND WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO

MY WIFE

KATHERINE SLEEPER WALDEN

THE DOG–PUNCHER'S SONG

I STRUNG my dogs in the gloaming
For a run down the river's race;
I was sick of the town with its gay delights,
Sick of a woman's face.
I longed for the open tundra
Where the ravens hold their sway,
For I'd dropped my all
At a siren's call —
For such is the driver's way.

I found your trail in the morning:
'Neath it the river ran;
You were traveling down its white expanse,
The wife of another man.
I fought for you in the evening,
And the ravens got their prey.
I came into your life
With storm and strife —
For such is the driver's way.

When you compelled me to leave you,
With my dogs I headed west;
Into the land that freezes all,
Leaving what I loved best.
The thought of your beauty with me,
For which I had to pay
With hunger and cold
In search for gold —
For such is the driver's way.

And when at last returning,
With my dogs all spent and lame —
The toll of the trail had got them all
And only my haste to blame —
The call of a girl who waited,
Had kept me on my 'lay;'
Lured back from the wilds
By the thought of your smiles —
For such is the driver's way.

Then at your feet I faltered,
And laid my plunder there;
With all the gold I brought to you
To vie with your shining hair.
You put your arms around me
And told me I might stay,
If I cast my sins
With my moccasins —
For such is the driver's way.

The time is bound to be coming,
When I'll return no more;
It may be in the Barren Lands,
Or on the Northern Shore;
It may be other footprints
Will lead my own astray,
To go out of your life
With the stroke of a knife —
For such is the driver's way.

Then, when you've ceased your waiting
For a lover that comes no more,
Weary, silent, watching in vain,
Your heart bereft and sore,
You'll back to the land you came from,
To the town so bright and gay,
Forgetting your mate,
His dogs and his fate —
For such is a woman's way.

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A. T. W

CONTENTS

I.	Across Chilkoot Pass	1
II.	Down the Yukon to Circle City	18
III.	Freighting with Dogs	32
IV.	Keeping Order in Circle City	48
V.	The Gold Strike on the Klondike	66
VI.	Dawson before the Rush	84
VII.	Winter on Short Rations	98
VIII.	With the Rush over White Pass	120
IX.	Dawson in the Midst of the Boom	145
X.	Pack-Trains, Dogs, and Stampedes	169
XI.	Running the Yukon with Scows	195
XII.	Robbers and Crowded Trails	210
XIII.	The Beach Diggings	235
XIV.	Snow-Fields and Ice-Floes	255
XV.	Camping on the Circle	265

ILLUSTRATIONS

THE AUTHOR AND HIS TEAM, DAWSON, 1898 *Frontispiece*

ON THE TRAIL IN CHILKOOT PASS 6
Photograph by Asahel Curtis

CANYON OF THE YUKON, APRIL 20, 1896 18

FIVE FINGER RAPIDS 24
Photograph by Asahel Curtis

A WAY-HOUSE 32
Photograph by Asahel Curtis

THE ARMSTRONG SAWMILL 42
Photograph by Asahel Curtis

LOUSE TOWN, WITH DAWSON IN THE BACKGROUND 90
Photograph by Asahel Curtis

THE RUSH OVER CHILKOOT PASS 122

NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE AT DAWSON 134

SHOOTING WHITE HORSE RAPIDS 142
Photograph by Asahel Curtis

A NEWSPAPER COMES TO TOWN, DAWSON, 1898 158
Photograph by Asahel Curtis

DOWN THE BIG RIVER BY SCOW TO THE GOLD DIGGINGS 198

INTRODUCTION

PICTURE a broad, deep room, pleasantly cluttered with many books and much besides. Across one corner a big fireplace, flanked by a high settle. Before the fire a great, grizzled dog, his head as broad as your two hands. Other dogs here and there, three or four of them, resting or wandering about. Through the thin haze of smoke from pipe and cigarette the faces of men. With them, one, the master of the dogs, standing out always from the rest, vigorous, active; features slashed with the sharp strokes of strenuous adventures; hair graying, but muscles alive with youth; eyes alert; cigarette forever burning down to stained forefinger and thumb.

Let me tell you about this man Walden.

Sprung from a family of marked mental attainments, the son of a minister and writer, he came to young manhood with an unusual endowment of keen mental background coupled with high initiative. No humdrum could satisfy him then, or since; no orderly life of social conventions, or placid stream of regulated existence.

At twenty-four he struck out for Alaska. It was the vivid frontier of the day, newly set afire by gold discoveries, and its lure was irresistible. But it was not gold that drew this youth, nor has it ever been.

The challenge was that of adventure, of search for the untried, of pioneering beyond the farthest fringe of the accepted and commonplace into the unknown. It is the same characteristic that leads him to-day, at the age when most men count inaction a luxury, to look upon his coming participation in an Antarctic expedition as the most prized privilege of his life.

He reached the country of the Yukon in the early part of '96, when Circle City was the center and the Birch Creek mines the magnet. Always an understanding companion of dogs, he was soon hauling freight across the white wilderness with dog-team. This was the Alaska of the days before the Klondike, the frontier of the miners' meetings and the sourdough, the land of justice and order without laws or statutes, the period of the gambling-hall that was strict and square. Walden saw and took part in it all.

A year later came the Big Rush, sweeping in like a flood, bringing with it every manner of man and woman under the sun, all crazed with dreams of gold, school-teacher and sport, drygoods clerk and lumber-jack, minister and thug, young bride and woman of the streets. Dawson, a single log cabin, became a city of forty thousand. Skagway, notorious cesspool, received its filth of gunmen who shot their victims in the back. Again Walden, making trips with freight and mail and passengers behind his dogs, saw it in all its detail.

Prospectors, digging in the beach sands of Behring Sea, across Norton Sound from the mouth of the Yukon, found much gold; and Nome rose to its zenith. Walden went down the river, crossed to the beach diggings, and shared life there. With hundreds of others he passed a winter keenly characterized by the daily problem of finding enough food to keep soul in body.

A few hardy sourdoughs pushed out across the limitless wastes of the Arctic tundra, and Walden was one of them. With a chance acquaintance he built a cabin. The two of them occupied it through a long Arctic winter, their food supplies dried salmon and a small stock of flour that they eked out by mixing with it a third of reindeer moss. For six months they did not speak.

'Have you ever seen him since?' I asked one time.

'No! And, by Heaven, I hope I never shall!'

And finally home.

Some of us, his friends, have known of the wealth of his adventures and have heard them related, bit by bit, in front of the big fireplace or on the trail in the mountains where he now makes his home. We have had no need to be told that his was no ordinary narrative. Here was a man who had the zeal to seek the utmost of new experience, the nerve to dare what most men would shrink from, the mental background to appreciate what he saw, and a sense of humor to lighten even the times when he flirted with death. And, by good fortune, he hit upon the

Alaska of the gold rush, unique, vivid, splashed with color like a bizarre canvas.

At last he has set down the narrative, from beginning to end, directly and simply, as he would tell it to you before the fireplace, with the dogs about, and the haze of smoke, and the cigarette burning down to a flaking ash. It is history, authentic and first-hand. But it is more than that. It is a story of high adventure, keenly sought and splendidly found.

WALTER COLLINS O'KANE

A DOG-PUNCHER ON THE YUKON

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CHAPTER I

ACROSS CHILKOOT PASS

When I made my first trip into Alaska in March, '96, very little was known in the East about this country, except for the tourist trip from Seattle up what is called the 'Inside Passage' to the vicinity of Juneau and back. This takes in practically all the scenic region, but it is only a small part of Alaska; and no one who has seen only this section of the coast can form any idea of the land where men suffered and died for love of gold, two years later.

Southeastern Alaska is entirely different from the rest of the country. One great difference between the coast and the interior is the climate, which is tempered by the Japan Current west of the Coast Range. I have seen it raining in Skagway, when, thirty-five miles away over the mountains, by the meandering line of the railroad, it was sixty below zero. There is very little in common between the two sides of the mountains, even to the inhabitants. I do not mean to give the idea that it is always warm, with no snow, on the coast, but the country there

does not have the intense cold of the interior. It has a wet climate while the interior is more or less dry.

We made the trip from Juneau, where we had outfitted, to Dyea, in a small tug loaded with men and dogs bound for the interior. The tug was completely housed in, and everybody, including the dogs, slept on the crowded enclosed deck, as there were no berths. Most of the men were, like myself, what is called in the jargon 'Cheechakos' or newcomers. A few old-timers or 'Sourdoughs' were going back after a winter spent in the States. Every one was busted and had only an outfit consisting of more or less food, together with a large supply of faith in his own good luck. It was food and not money we needed after landing.

The trip was about one hundred miles up the Lynn Canal, and very rough. We had to seek shelter for several hours until the gale blew itself out. Almost every one was seasick and lay around on the covered deck, cold and miserable. I remember one large and very sick man who was lying on his back with his head toward me. My collie dog Shirley, whom I had brought from home, was lying beside me, and for some unknown reason he got up, walked over to this man, scratched his hat off, and with the other paw raked the whole length of his bald head. The yell the man let out raised the whole boat and sent Shirley back to my side, where he lay down as before. The man seemed to think it was all a part

of the seasickness, and, as he was large and powerful, I did not care to enlighten him.

Dyea was the last town on the coast, at the mouth of a small stream called the Dyea River, and at the beginning of the Chilkoot Trail. The town consisted of a trading post run by Heron and Wilson, and a dozen or more Indian shacks. Here our tug anchored about a mile out, at the head of the Lynn Canal, and our outfits were put on a lighter which was warped in-shore. There was a good deal of floating ice which complicated matters. When there were horses to unload, they were backed over the side and made to swim ashore.

The beach and the country for half a mile back were destitute of snow, and as we depended on snow for our sleds we had to have our outfits hauled across to the snow-line by a pirate horse-team which took our last dollar. There we made our first camp in Alaska, along with about a hundred other men who were getting their provisions up the trail by repeated 'back tripping' or relays.

On April 1st we left the coast for our journey into the interior. The real work of getting into the Yukon began here, and each man, unless he was rich enough to hire some one to carry his outfit over to the lakes at the headwaters of the Yukon, was absolutely dependent on himself. The Indians were charging one cent per pound per mile for packing, and were not overly eager to work, even at that price.

I remember one party of three who had come from the East and were camping out when we arrived. They became discouraged hauling their own stuff, and tried to beat the Indians down. Now an Indian is always ready to go up on his price, but never comes down. After a good deal of haggling, one Indian called the leader of the party 'Cultus Boston,' which means in the Chinook jargon, 'no good American.' The satisfied expression on the white man's face was indescribable, as he explained to his friend that 'even the unsophisticated aborigines recognized us as cultivated Boston people!' These men never reached the summit. About the only men who had their goods packed over were the traders and gamblers.

Every one had provided himself with a seven-foot long and sixteen-inch wide Yukon sled and pack-straps. Two men generally went together for the mutual help afforded and economy of camp outfit. More than this number gave cause for dissension, and goodness knows there was enough trouble with only two. A lone man, if he could get along at all, certainly had the best of it, although I have known men who could not even get along with themselves.

The large majority were hauling their outfits themselves without any dogs. My partner was hauling his own sled, but I had my dog Shirley, whom I had broken to harness, to help me. For the first few miles we crossed an open flat, following up the Dyea River, walled around by steep rocky

mountains with timber near the base. Suddenly a canyon opened out of this wall like a huge doorway. It was a rift opening into the mountains, down which a glacial torrent cascaded into the plain.

The rift was sheer rock and was from fifteen to fifty feet wide, and a hundred or more feet high, with a few trees clinging to it; the grade through it was steep, over a series of waterfalls. The stream had frozen while the water was at high level, after which it had dropped, taking the thinner parts of the ice with it, so that we had to go around holes on a narrow ledge of ice where the raging torrent was twenty or thirty feet below us. In some places pole bridges had to be made, almost like ladders; in others there was only a narrow rim to crawl around on. The later the season the harder the traveling, as the ice was giving way. It was so thick before the thaw started that a band of horses had been taken over it, but at this time only dogs and men could do the work. From one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds was all that a man could handle alone, with help over the bad places.

The canyon then opened out into a round valley called 'Sheep Camp.' This was the headquarters of the mountain sheep hunters who camped here in the last timber on this side of the range. Here every one made a more or less permanent camp, and the outfits were relayed up to it. The valley is like a basin, surrounded by high rocky mountains impossible to climb, with a sharp notch cut in the rim. This notch

is the notorious Chilkoot Pass. From Sheep Camp to the foot of the pass was five miles of steep grade. A horse weighing a thousand pounds was barely able to haul a load of three hundred pounds on a narrow Yukon sled, with two men to help him. The snow was very deep, but was so hard that it would bear the horses up.

At one spot on the rim of the basin there was an overhanging glacier, which two years later broke, in the warm weather, letting loose a flood of water that cleared everything out of the valley, including two huge boulders called the 'Stone Houses.' As there was nobody on the trail at the time it did no harm. But a snow-slide a short time before had killed a large number of prospectors. Over sixty bodies were found.

When the foot of the pass was reached, everything had to be packed on men's backs for the last twelve hundred and fifty feet. The grade was so steep that a man standing in the footholds cut in the hard snow could touch the wall in front of him without losing his balance.

Horses were fastened in a rope sling and led up the trail on a long rope, with a hundred men or more to each horse, until the horses lost their footing, when they were hauled up to the summit lying on their sides. They were then led through the sharp cut, blindfolded, backed over the edge, and slid down the other slope on their backs to Crater Lake, some four hundred feet below. This was not as

ON THE TRAIL IN CHILKOOT PASS

rough as it sounds, and was the only way of getting them over. I did not see a horse that was either hurt or frightened, but then they were Western ponies. The following year, when thousands of people tried to get into the country over the newly discovered White Pass, twenty-five hundred or three thousand horses were killed.

Besides the bad traveling and hard work getting over Chilkoot Pass, terrible storms often raged for days, making it impossible to move from camp. When men were caught halfway up, pack and load had to be abandoned and a stampede made for camp. Quantities of goods were lost during the winters, and the Indians made a business of picking them up when the snows went off.

A curious thing happened up here, which for some unknown reason affected us very queerly and was a good deal talked about. The weather had turned cold. A man was driving a team composed of the usual long-haired dogs of the country, together with one short-haired greyhound. One morning the short-haired dog was found frozen solid, standing up: there he stood with his tail between his legs, his back arched and his head down. The owner was very much criticized for the treatment of his dogs. There were some short-haired dogs on the trail, but men were always careful to let them sleep in their tents.

We stayed at Sheep Camp until all our outfit had been relayed up and pushed on ahead to the summit;

then we broke camp and moved completely over to Lake Linderman. It took twenty-three days to get our twelve hundred pounds over the twenty-three miles from tidewater to the lake. Here timber began again, and another camp was made until the outfit left on the summit could be relayed down. This was comparatively easy, as it was nine miles, all down-hill, through another canyon, bleak and barren, which was completely frozen. From here on it was good sledding on the lakes. Men camped along the shores where good timber was found, and built their boats for the trip down-river.

There are five of these lakes in a string, which are really a widening of the river, and the source of the Yukon. Except for Mud or Marsh Lake, which is shallow with flat shores, they are surrounded by high mountains.

Lake Linderman, the first of the string, is only six miles long. This is connected by a short, swift stream with Lake Bennett, which is twenty-seven miles long. A sluggish stream called 'Caribou Crossing' connects this with Tagish Lake, which is twenty-five miles long, and into this, halfway down, Windy Arm comes in. A gale always blows down Windy Arm.

Tagish Houses are at the foot of Tagish Lake. These 'Houses' are mostly Indian graves. The Indian in this section cremates his dead and packs their ashes in nicely made, brass-bound wooden boxes, which are put in small slatted houses built on posts.

I remember a man who found one of these boxes in the woods. Not knowing what it was he took it to use for a grub-chest, and did not discover his mistake until some days later, when the widow and some other Indians called at his camp for something to eat and recognized it. After scaring the poor prospector almost to death, they allowed him to keep it on payment of most of his outfit. He did not want it by this time, and neither did the widow: but he paid well for his mistake and was the laughing-stock of the river. Later on the Canadian Government put in a customs house here.

At the head of Tagish Lake we found good timber, and five or six other camps, and we decided to stay there a month or six weeks and build our boats, as we had no teams to haul our stuff over the ice and had to wait till the lakes broke up so that we could go on by water. It took days to build these boats. They were whip-sawed from round logs, placed on a scaffolding and ripped into boards with a long saw operated by one man above and one below. We called these locally the 'Armstrong Sawmill,' and they certainly were a test of friendship.

After finishing our boats and before it was time to launch them, everybody went hunting, but without much success. We had an old hunter with us who was always boasting, but he never had any luck at all. When my partner and I, who were young at the game, proposed to go off hunting, this old chap

derided our efforts, and said he would eat at one sitting all the game we brought in.

I had taken Shirley with me so that in case we wounded any game he would track it. Well, we hunted and hunted and hunted, and all we could find were tracks, and there were plenty of those. Finally we scared up a partridge and began to shoot at its head with our big '45 rifles. Whether we killed it or not I don't remember, but all at once Shirley raised a tremendous racket in the woods and we started over, knowing he had found something or other of importance. We rushed over to the sound from different angles, and right in the center of a clearing was a large spruce tree up which a bear was climbing. I was a little ahead of my partner and yelled back to him, 'Hurry up, because there's a moose here and he's climbing a tree.' I certainly had moose on the brain.

Then we began to shoot, and the bear slid down out of the tree. I don't think she had any idea except to get away, but my partner happened to be standing in the middle of the path she chose. What would have happened I don't know, but the minute she started to run, Shirley slipped up and bit her from behind, and the bear whirling on him the dog jumped off to one side. This was repeated over and over, while we kept pouring lead into her from our repeaters.

Finally she dropped and we came up to her. Shirley was still worried, darting in and snapping

at her and jumping away again. At last he realized she was dead, when he boldly swaggered up and got her by the throat and hung on. She was certainly dead; she had nine balls through her, strung along in a line from her hind foot all the way along to her nose. Why Shirley didn't get shot I don't know.

Looking up in the tree I discovered three little puff-balls in the top branches looking down at me. We shot one, but it was so small and cunning that we decided to capture the others alive, so while Billy got the sugar sack, which we carried our lunch in, I climbed up the tree as far as it would carry my weight, and started to cut the top off. I worked here with a dull old knife, and then we changed places, Billy climbing up while I slid down to catch the bears as they dropped.

It wasn't long before the top of the tree came down, striking on its tip end without hurting the cubs; in fact they didn't even loosen their hold. Grabbing a bear by a hind paw in each hand, I managed to get them into the sugar sack before they realized what had happened, and then began a tempest in a tea-pot. Such snarling, yelling, and screeching I have never heard.

Billy all this time was adding to the noise by yelling to me from the tree-top not to let them go. I was shaking the cubs up and down in the sack to keep them from biting their way out, when suddenly the commotion stopped, and I could hear the little rascals licking the sugar off the inside of the

sack. These were the smallest bears I have ever seen: they were about the size of small cats. I weighed one of them three months afterwards and he then weighed only six pounds.

Of course we were tickled to death with our find, not only on our own account, but because we had beaten the old hunter. We went back to camp with the three small bears, one dead and two alive, leaving the old mother bear, as she was too heavy to pack.

The old hunter was a stingy old devil and was the only man who had any raisins in the whole camp. These he would not give away or sell. But he was a man who would bet on anything, so I told my partner to go over to his camp, and when he was asked what luck we had, to tell him we killed a bear. This he did.

Of course the old man didn't believe him, and after a little fencing Billy bet him that we had actually killed a bear, his raisins against a partly used can of condensed milk that we'd saved up. Everything was going very well until they got down to the quantity of raisins, when Billy, expecting to get the bet raised, told him we had got four bears. This disgusted the old hunter so much that he wouldn't bet under any conditions, and we never got even a smell of the raisins. At that it was just as well, for we found that in our absence one of the little bears had appropriated the condensed milk.

Early the next morning four of us started back

to bring in the old bear. My partner and I were some distance ahead of the others when we thought we discovered another enormous bear, the largest I have ever seen. There he stood on a small knoll, in the early morning light, turning slowly around. He was so large that we decided we would wait for the other men to come up. Then we thought we would get a little closer, and that bear got smaller and smaller until at close quarters it turned into an enormous porcupine. We killed it, but didn't tell the other two men what we had thought it was.

What the mother bear weighed I don't know, but I know it took the four of us to carry her home. A peculiar thing about this bear family was that the mother was brown, two of the cubs were black, and one was brown, and one of the black cubs was twice as large as the others. I have an idea it may have been a stray she had picked up somewhere.

My partner's pet bear broke his chain and got away. Mine was always getting away, but we had the good or bad fortune to catch him again each time, and much to our sorrow we had him with us in the boat all the way down the river.

One or two things are worth mentioning about this little bear. One was that if you turned your back he at once tried to poke everything out of the boat into the river. This wasn't so bad when the things would float, but at one place we had pulled the boat up on a sand bar, and gone back a couple of hundred feet to get firewood to cook dinner, when

all of a sudden Billy turned around and said, 'Look at that damned bear!' There he was, standing on the gunwale, pushing everything possible overboard, sour-dough box, pans, tobacco tins, everything, working with every single foot independent of the other.

Rushing down to the boat Billy picked up a rock almost as big as his head and slammed it at the bear, but falling short it struck one side of the boat, breaking a plank which took us almost half a day to repair. The bear gave us one look, and dived down under the canvas that covered our plunder.

By this time both of us were pretty well clawed up. He was just as nice as could be up to a certain point. We could pet him, and he would play all kinds of antics for half an hour at a time. But he always ended up by flying into a rage and tackling everything in sight. The only way to quiet him was to chuck him overboard and let him tow for a while. Then we would pull him in, and he would sit on top of the canvas, eyeing first one of us and then the other, with the expression, 'Just wait till I grow up!' When we got to Circle City I traded him off for a camp outfit to a man I didn't care much about.

In this and other camps there was quite a lot of quarreling going on between partners who had seen too much of each other. But usually there was nothing of a serious nature, and it was generally settled by a division of all the property. As a rule these 'divorces,' as these were called, were accomplished

without any trouble: things that couldn't be divided were tossed up for. But occasionally men would get into the frame of mind where no fair division could be made, as neither man would allow the other the least advantage, even temporarily.

In one of these extreme cases the outfit was divided until they got to the boat, which, as luck would have it, was a double-ender. They cut the boat across the middle, each patching the cut end up. They cut the tent exactly in half. The axe, the stove, and the one gun they possessed in common were thrown into the Yukon. Then each man went down the river by himself. The division was made before a crowd of men who offered suggestions and advice of the most ridiculous kind, but the two men went serenely on with their work, apparently oblivious to the jests of the crowd.

At this time, although the lakes hadn't begun to thaw, the light frosty snow of the country had completely disappeared, and the flowers were blooming.

It was while here that I got my first lessons in baking bread in the ground. The method was this: A shallow hole was dug in the sand and a fire lighted in it and allowed to burn out, thoroughly heating the ground all around it. While the ground was being heated, bread was made of sour dough, put between two gold-pans, and allowed to rise. Then the hot ashes and dirt were scooped out of the hole and the gold pans put in and covered with ashes and hot sand. The bread was allowed to stay in about

an hour: if left in too long it wouldn't burn, but the crust would get thicker. The loaf came out a rich golden brown and very delicious. This of course was only done when conditions were favorable. A great competition started up in the different camps as to who could bake the biggest loaf, and a man, hearing of a dishpan some one had ten miles back on the trail, walked over and borrowed it, and beat us all.

We also learned to jerk meat while we were waiting for the ice to go out. Lean meat is cut in thin strips and dipped in very strong boiling brine, after which the strips are hung over a light rack of branches and allowed to grow dry and hard. A smoky fire is kept burning near by to keep the flies away. The meat when done was about as tough as leather and almost as black. It was really very good and sustaining; it could be stewed, but we preferred it raw and carried little chunks in our pockets.

As the river between the lakes began to break up, we saw a great many migratory birds come in, geese, ducks of many kinds, and some swans. We were able to kill a few birds, but they were very poor eating, being thin after their long flight. It was certainly nice to feel that they had come up from the South, as it gave us the idea that spring was coming.

We found it interesting picking out the different kinds of geese and ducks. Even a few loons drifted in, and the air was constantly full of birds. Not many nested around here. They went farther north

toward the mouth of the Yukon. Years later when we were going down the Yukon in a small boat, we got lost among the islands below the Flats. We took the wrong slough and went some distance inland and away from the general travel, thus passing through one of the so-called 'goose-pastures,' where the noise was almost deafening and the geese could have been counted by the thousand.

CHAPTER II

DOWN THE YUKON TO CIRCLE CITY

FINALLY we got off in our boat, and crossed Mud Lake, which is nineteen miles long and very shallow. Halfway over a terrific thunder-shower came up, and after it was over the sun came out hot and I trolled astern with a spoon. The first fish I caught was a large salmon trout, which our little bear immediately grabbed as soon as I swung it aboard. His one idea seemed to be to tear the fish to pieces, and, Shirley joining in, the only way we had of breaking up the row was to throw both the bear and the fish overboard.

At the foot of Mud Lake, Fifty-Mile River begins, and halfway down we had to pass through Miles Canyon, and Squaw and White Horse Rapids, in all about three miles of as rough water as any type of boat could undertake to negotiate. About a mile above Miles Canyon, on the right bank, some kind person had hung out a warning in the shape of a white rag. We were on the lookout for something of this kind, and, landing, walked down to look things over. We found many boats collected here, making ready to go through or around the rapids, according to a man's ability and a boat's capacity.

The water above the canyon is about a quarter of a mile wide with a six-mile current; this narrows to a

CANYON OF THE YUKON, APRIL 20, 1896

hundred feet or less, between sheer blank walls of rock that tower far up into the air, the water sucking down into this natural sluice-box at about eighteen miles an hour. The current is ridged up in the middle five or six feet high, and on top are tremendous rollers, so that a boat is always standing on one end or the other.

Halfway down, the canyon bends sharply to the left, and there is a large whirlpool on the inner side. It is about two hundred feet across, and in it the water goes around at a terrific pace. The rim is high and the center many feet lower; there is, however, no suction toward the center, and if a boat is not dashed to pieces on the walls there is not much danger, as there are no rollers.

The trick of going through the canyon was to keep the boat straight, and cross the whirlpool as far on the right as possible without hitting the wall; if this was not done, you were likely to get into the merry-go-round and had to trust to luck to get out. I remember two Swedes who had this experience and were carried round and round for over two hours, in spite of all their efforts to get out. At last they gave themselves up as lost and lay down in the bottom of the boat, but after a time they were suddenly swept out and down the rest of the way without mishap. There is a saying in the Yukon, 'As lucky as a Swede.'

Most of the boats were unloaded before entering the canyon and the outfits carried over the hills to

a point below rough water, while the empty boats were run through by a few experts. Some did not do this and were sorry. Eighteen men were drowned in these rapids one spring.

Below these are Squaw Rapids, which are open and the danger is from rocks alone. Most of the boats were let down along the shore by long ropes, with two men in each boat to guide it through and around the rocks.

The rough water ends in the White Horse, where the river narrows to twenty or twenty-five feet, and is a mass of spray, but the shores are long ledges and the boats could be pulled out and run along shore to smooth water. This was slow and hard work, and took some time to accomplish, but it was safe. The other way was to rig your bateau or scow with fore-and-aft sweeps, lashed onto outriggers, then to cut loose from the shore a couple of hundred yards above the rapids — and you were through everything, provided you were lucky.

We had had wonderful luck, and acted as pilots, charging from ten to fifty dollars per boat or scow. There is a saying that there is always a last time, and this I saw proved by one of the very best men. Later the Canadian Government blew out the worst rocks in White Horse Rapids, making it very much safer, and since the opening of the railroad, which goes over White Horse Pass, the route is not used.

I have always had great admiration for the presence of mind of men who are good in an emergency,

and I remember one instance of three men who attempted to go through the canyon in an overloaded bateau. The boat was swamped, and the men, who could not swim, were only saved by the steersman, who abandoned his sweep, jumped onto the gunwale of the boat and tipped it over, thereby ridding it of its load, and the three men went through clinging to its upturned bottom.

Another thing that has always interested me is to see how men can avoid hard work by using their brains. One instance of this kind was connected with this canyon. Two boats with two men apiece traveled together toward the rapids. The first boat to get there was worked through with half a load, as the men knew something of the river conditions. When they got back, expecting to pack the balance of their load over the hills, they found that the other boat had arrived, and they told these Cheechakos such tales of the terrors of the rapids that the newcomers were completely unnerved, and begged to have their boat taken through for them.

This was agreed to on condition that everything should be taken out of it. When this was done and the Cheechakos had been sent away on some wild-goose chase, the men loaded into it the balance of their own cargo, took it through the rapids, and left the entire load of the second boat to be packed over the mountains. Needless to say, the two groups were hardly on speaking terms for the rest of the trip.

A great many men who were inexperienced in nav-

igating rapids unloaded their boats and turned them loose to take their chance, while they packed their load around over the hills. The luck of the rapids was very strange. I remember an Englishman traveling alone, a morose man who always kept to himself and who strangely enough had never heard of the rapids. For some unknown reason he came through the whole length without mishap, and as he casually tied up his boat at the foot he wanted to know if there were 'any more of these bloody blooming jump-offs in the river.'

There was another case of a Norwegian who had lived many years in the country, and who was coming back alone with a large outfit in a big bateau. For some reason of his own he brought a music-box along and played it going through the rapids, until a wave of the White Horse swamped it and stopped the noise: but the man's intentions were good.

The strangest load I ever saw taken through was in the rush of '98, when a scow-load of cats was brought in, and sold at the then thriving town of Dawson for an ounce of gold apiece. They went off like hot cakes, as mice were very prevalent in the town, but their number was quickly reduced, as the place was swarming with dogs. No one at the customs house knew the duty on cats, so they charged the importer a dollar each on the fur.

Twenty-five miles below the rapids the stream widens out into Lake La Barge, the largest and last of the string. The lake is thirty-seven miles long

and very stormy, and every one was glad to get safely across it. The wind constantly blew either up the lake or down the lake, and, as no one had real sailboats and all were overloaded, men would wait until they got a favorable wind before starting out.

Halfway down Lake La Barge we stopped on a rocky island where gulls were circling around, and hunted for eggs. We found only one, which we divided equally, not having yet lost our taste for delicacies. After leaving the island, while we were sailing along with a gentle breeze, the sail jammed and we were unable to lower it. This almost crowded the boat under water till we were able to cut the ropes loose.

The rest of the way down the lake everything went smoothly. Below we found a very swift piece of water called 'Thirty-Mile River,' which flows into the Hootalinqua River. These upper reaches of the Yukon are known as the 'Lewis River,' and the peculiarity of this part of the river is that the water is low in spring, and high in fall, because it drains the lake basin which is supplied by snows and glaciers. The reverse is the case with the rivers coming from the interior. So we had low water on the Lewis River until we joined the Hootalinqua, which at that time was in flood, and just the other way round in the autumn.

As we were floating down the river late one night in the twilight, Billy, who was steering, dropped his paddle and picked up his rifle, telling me to hold the

boat steady as he wanted to shoot at something swimming in the river. He took a shot, and the thing reared up on end. Seeing that it couldn't get away, I rowed the boat over to it, when with a great deal of scratching and clawing a large lynx made its appearance over the bow of the boat and sat on the extreme end.

It looked more like the Devil than anything I have ever seen. Shirley rose in his wrath, and with every bristle on end disputed the animal's further progress down the boat. Billy had to knock it back into the water, where we killed it. I was very much surprised to find a lynx in the middle of the river, but heard afterwards that they are good swimmers.

When we got down to Circle City my partner told a crowd of men about it, who joked him about finding a wild-cat in the river. I was sitting some distance off and overheard the conversation. One of the men came over to me and asked me if we had actually found a lynx in the river. I absolutely denied it, whereupon they promptly dubbed Billy 'Wild-Cat Bill,' which name stuck to him for good.

Below the Hootalinqua there were two more stretches of bad water, Five Fingers and Rink Rapids; these, however, were not bad if taken on the right-hand side of the stream. The rest of the way to Circle City, at that time the banner town of the interior, the river was smooth and safe except for what were called 'sweepers,' or trees whose roots had been undermined by the river and were leaning

FIVE FINGER RAPIDS

out across the stream, together with caving banks, where in some places as much as eight or ten acres would fall into the river at once. All these dangers, however, could be avoided by keeping in the middle of the stream, which at this point is from half to three quarters of a mile wide.

One of the most unpleasant nights of my life was spent several years later on the lower river, when a strong wind and current swept us almost under one of these overhanging banks, where the water had melted the silt and the stream was rushing under the banks for goodness knows how far. To avoid going under we threw out a home-made anchor which, luckily for ourselves, held us a few yards from this swirling water-made cavern. But having very little faith in either the anchor or the strength of the rope, we lay all night speculating as to whether we were getting any nearer to those caves or not. When the wind dropped in the morning, we cut the rope and by hard rowing were just able to get by.

The destination of the prospector in those days was either Forty-Mile on the British side, or Circle City, two hundred and forty miles farther down the river on the American side. You will have some realization of the slowness and roughness of travel in those days when I say that I left the coast on the 1st of April, and got to Circle City, nine hundred and ninety miles distant, on the 4th of July.

Circle City itself was started in '94. The Birch Creek Mines, of which it was the base, lay from

sixty-five to eighty miles back from the river to the south. The trail across was over a swampy plateau, covered with shallow ponds and muskeg, and a few stunted spruces. In summer there was absolutely no game of any kind on these flats, on account of the mosquitoes, which are simply impossible to describe. Not a particle of the body could be exposed, and the sun was actually obliterated. Pack-horses were generally covered with a canvas sheet, and their nostrils had to be perpetually cleaned out or they would choke. Men have been known to go raving mad: the mosquitoes never let you alone day or night, though at that time of year it was all daylight. Mosquitoes were the worst hardship we had to bear when traveling in Alaska, and I have known men who had readily braved all previous hardships, but who gave up when it came to facing that pest.

Practically all the miners carried their packs on their backs and did not use pack-animals. They generally relayed their stuff from the river to the mines, working their way across in three trips. Birch Creek, which is really a large river running parallel with the Yukon for several hundred miles, had to be crossed. If you were lucky enough to find a boat you could load your outfit on it and pole it and tow it to within twenty miles of the mines. We were fortunate enough to find one which some men had just abandoned; so we loaded in our outfits and, although the mileage was longer, we were able to make better time.

Part of the way we followed a branch of Birch Creek called 'Crooked Creek,' which was the most beautiful piece of water I have ever seen. It ran between spruce timber that was high for this country and on rather high banks. The stream itself was practically without current, and was about three feet deep from bank to bank. It was swarming with different kinds of fish, and moose and bear were plentiful. I have never seen such high-bush blueberries; and strawberries, cranberries, and mossberries were very plentiful. But owing to the irony of fate we couldn't spare the sugar to eat on them.

The mines themselves were named after Birch Creek, which made a big sweep of a hundred miles around them, and were in the hills where there was little or no timber. The mosquitoes were not so bad here, as there was more or less of a breeze. The mines were what are called shallow diggings, and had to be worked in an open cut, since there was not overlay enough to be worked in deep diggings, as was the case later in the Klondike. So all work had to be done in summer, which has a duration of only sixty to eighty days up there. Practically everybody lived in tents very near his work. Wages were ten dollars a day, paid in gold dust at seventeen dollars an ounce.

Life here was crude in every way, but it was still more primitive beyond for the prospector who poked back a hundred miles or more into the wilderness, possibly alone. On his way from his 'prospect'

to the 'outside' this man saw his fellow men for the first time at the mines. The next step toward civilization was Circle City, where there were a limited number of women and children who had braved the wilds with their husbands, and where people lived in log cabins. From there he went up the river and down to the coast to the then thriving town of Juneau, where he found churches, schools, and all the advantages and disadvantages of civilization. The last stage was down to Seattle, where civilization in its most modern expression was reached. A man taking this route depended entirely on his own food and skill for transportation as far as Juneau; beyond that it was the almighty dollar that did the work.

There was another route that was taken in summer; down the Yukon by steamer to St. Michael's Island at the mouth of the river in Behring Sea. There if you were lucky enough to catch a coast steamer you could go back to civilization by the Aleutian Islands. This is the way the women usually traveled.

In the early days before the rush, the crude necessities of life were brought up by this route. They reached St. Michael's from Seattle the first summer, and if they missed the last boat up the river they lay there all winter, and were brought upstream by the river steamers the following summer. When I first went out in '96 there were only three river steamers. They all burned wood cut on the river,

and the upstream trip of fifteen hundred miles was so slow that they could not make more than two trips each year.

As the cold weather came on, and the miners began to flock back into Circle City, my partner and I built a cabin and made our headquarters here for the winter. This was the winter of '96–'97 and was just before the beginning of the rush to the Klondike.

This was my first experience of the freeze-up of the Yukon, a remarkable sight. Early in October very thin sheets of transparent ice about three or four feet in diameter are noticed coming downstream; these are almost as thin as window glass, and as they grow thicker and more plentiful they rub together, and turn up at the edges like Japanese water-lilies, and gradually turn white. This usually continues for a day or so when, as far as I know, the river clears of all ice.

In a week or ten days the same thing begins again, the ice gradually filling the whole river. The cakes freeze together till the middle of the river is a solid mass of slowly moving ice. This white ribbon breaks at some of the sharper bends and opens, leaving a huge V-shaped crack of water to be closed later. The ice gets thicker and denser and travels slower and slower until the final freeze-up, when it closes for good.

The final closing of the river is almost as spectacular as the break-up in the spring. Jamming on some island or between narrow cliffs a huge mass of

ice is piled higher and higher, and as more is perpetually being pushed down, in some places it stands more than fifty feet high, in great pinnacles, from bank to bank. The crushing and grinding noise it makes cannot be described, and is quite different from the roaring sound of the break-up.

As more ice comes down and crushes itself on this barrier, it freezes back solid, to a distance of twenty or thirty miles, gradually getting smoother until it meets a new barrier that has been formed above, and the whole process begins all over again.

This succession of huge barriers alternating with smoother sheets formed the surface on which we had to travel. It was terrifically rough, and very dangerous just after the freeze-up. The rushing current has a way of cutting the ice out, forming new lanes, until permanent channels for the winter are worn, and, as these changing lanes of water are not noticeable from the surface, we were in perpetual danger of falling in.

In some places in spite of the intense cold a channel will remain open all winter, and these open places are for some unknown reason not over the shallows, or where a jam has been formed, but where the ice is frozen smooth and the water is swift. Over rapids the spray will gradually freeze up solid across the stream, as at White Horse and the Canyon.

The ice this autumn played a curious trick in freezing up, just outside Circle City. In front of the

town the water had been frozen solid, where the back-water from a slough affected the current. A quantity of ice-cakes had been jammed together, making a circle about sixty feet in diameter, which was being revolved by contact with the running river ice on the outer edge. This wheel of ice went round and round, grinding itself into an absolutely perfect circle, until the river was completely frozen up. This strange phenomenon was called by us 'The Wheel of Fortune,' but, as it never rested until it stopped completely, there was no way of laying any bets on it.

CHAPTER III

FREIGHTING WITH DOGS

EARLY this winter, when I was living in Circle City, I made up my mind I would become a freighter, or what was called locally a 'dog-puncher.' And so it came about.

While everybody in this section had driven dogs more or less, there were only five of us who made this our entire business. Freight was left at Circle City by the river steamboats, and from there it was taken out to the Birch Creek Mines on sleds. In summer only the absolute necessities to keep the mines going were carried out, and the price was forty cents a pound.

There were two 'way-houses' on this line, afterwards called 'road-houses,' where we were furnished wood, water, and shelter, but nothing else; we carried our own provisions, did our own cooking, and provided our own bedding. These houses were long, low, log buildings covered with dirt roofs. The cracks were stopped up with the long moss of the country. A large ventilator, always open, kept the air fresh. There was a dirt floor, and the entire wall space, except the window, door, and a place for the stove, was occupied by tiers of single bunks made of poles, with a deacon-seat around the bottom. The bunks were filled with hay in the fall,

A WAY-HOUSE

but, as every one that came used the hay to put into his moccasins, it didn't last long and we slept on the bare poles.

The way-houses were much more comfortable than they sound, and generally had little bars connected with them. Outside there was a large corral made of long poles stuck upright in the ground, with a gate at each end. The loaded sleds were driven in here and the dogs turned outside. The corrals were designed to prevent the dogs from stealing from the loaded sleds. Also we cooled the dogs' food in them after cooking it.

On the way from Circle City to the mines we stopped at both of these way-houses, thus making the trip in three days. On our way back, empty, we jumped one way-house, making the return trip in two days. We had one day in town to collect a load, and thus made a round trip every six days.

Food was scarce in Circle City that winter, and we were put on an allowance. The boat intended for Circle City had stuck in the ice eighty miles below, at Fort Yukon. The necessities of life were freighted up on sleds from Fort Yukon and then out to the mines. This was done in the fall, as soon as it was possible to use sleds. It was a disagreeable trip, as the river was open in a great many places, and several teams broke through the ice and the loads were lost.

A dog-team with equipment for heavy freighting is totally different from that used for any other kind

of dog-driving. It consists of from six to seven large, heavy dogs of the native breed. We always liked to have two dogs who could lead if possible, so that when breaking trail one could relieve the other.

These dogs were locally called 'Malamutes,' from a tribe of Eskimos living at the mouth of the Yukon, from whom we got most of our dogs. The Eskimo dog, the Husky, and the Malamute are all the same breed. Variation in size is accounted for by the food they had had for generations in their particular localities.

There was another breed of dogs called the 'Porcupine River' or 'Mackenzie' Husky. These originated a great many years ago from a cross of the Eskimo with some large domesticated dog, and were the best freight dogs I have ever seen, being far superior to the Eskimo and much larger and stronger. One team of these dogs, the finest I have ever seen, weighed from a hundred and forty-five to a hundred and sixty-five pounds each, in working flesh.

A freight team was harnessed single file in what is now called the 'tandem hitch,' each dog wearing a leather collar something like a horse collar. The traces were hitched directly to this, without hames, and held in place by a back-band and belly-band.

The traces of the lead-dog ran far back to those of the dog behind him and were hitched about four inches to the rear of his hips. This method was repeated until you got to the dog in front of the sled-dog. His traces ran back past the sled-dog and were

not hitched to him, but to a little whiffle-tree, to which the sled-dog was also hitched by a short pair of traces working between the long ones. This gave the sled-dog a chance to jump out and pull at right angles, to help the driver get the sleds around corners.

From the little whiffle-tree a tug-rope about five feet long came back to the sled. The dog-driver walked astraddle of this tug-rope, which passed between his legs at the ankle. When the sleds were loaded and the dogs going at a walk, they were coupled up very closely. But there was another set of rings hitched at the junction of the back-band with the traces, into which the traces were snapped when the dogs were coming back light and at a trot. This lengthened the space between the dogs by about eighteen inches, giving them more freedom for fast traveling. When loaded we made only about three miles an hour; when light from six to seven.

The sleds were of the so-called 'Yukon type,' seven feet long, sixteen inches wide on the runners, so as to be able to follow the narrow trails, and clearing the ground by about four inches. The top overhung two inches along each side, making it twenty inches wide. On the sides were lash-ropes, like inverted V's, extending about eighteen inches above the sides. Two long lash ropes were fastened to the front end.

The method of loading was this: A light canvas

sheet measuring about eight by ten feet was first spread on the sled and the freight loaded on, the heaviest part about a third from the front end. Then the canvas was drawn up and wrapped around it, as you would wrap a bundle. The two long lash-ropes from the end were woven back and forth in the side-ropes, enveloping the whole in what looked like a fish-net. There was another rope V at the back and one in front. The lash-ropes were woven in and out of these two at the last, tightening up the whole thing. On long trips a little water was spattered over these joints, freezing and binding them together.

The ordinary freight outfit consisted of three full-sized sleds, one behind the other, drawn up close and connected by cross-chains, making each sled follow exactly in the same track as the sled ahead of it. The sleds had to be so strongly made and heavily braced with iron that each weighed from sixty to eighty pounds, the front one being the heaviest. They were loaded for the average team with six hundred, four hundred, and two hundred pounds apiece, thus making a total of twelve hundred pounds, or about two hundred pounds per dog.

On one side of the leading sled was what would correspond to a wagon-pole, called the 'gee-pole.' It was lashed to the side, was about six feet long and three inches thick at the butt end, and extended upward from the runners at an angle of forty-five degrees, almost to the height of a man's shoulder.

The driver walked in front of the first sled with the tug-rope between his feet, and the gee-pole in one hand. This gave him a leverage of about five feet, so that in steering a heavily loaded sled he could do it easily and accurately and stand upright. If the sled started to tip over in either direction, he could throw his weight on the pole and right the sled. He could also steady it on side-hills, and swing around corners making a wide turn, while the sled-dog, who was almost as well trained as the leader, helped him by jumping out of the traces and pulling at right angles. The gee-pole was used to break the sled loose when frozen in, by swinging it from side to side, and to hold back on when going down small hills.

On steep hills the dogs were unsnapped, and the driver rode the gee-pole, leaning far back on it with his legs stuck out in front, outrunning the dogs. This method was more or less dangerous but unavoidable. Several men were killed by running into trees; one man was killed by the gee-pole breaking and the stub running through his body.

A rough-lock brake was sometimes used on the back sled, but different grades on the same hill made this difficult. In some places where it was very steep, the sleds were sometimes tipped over and dragged down on their sides.

By using three sleds the load was distributed over twenty-one feet of bearing surface instead of twelve feet, as it would have been on one long sled. Being

connected by cross-chains the sleds would go over rough ground like a chain over a log, and wind through narrow trails in the forest where only a seven-foot sled would be worked through. If the sleds tipped over, they could be righted one by one; and on long hills, where it was impossible to haul the whole load at once, they were unhitched and pulled separately.

I could go on indefinitely, describing the advantages of this method, which made it possible to handle heavier loads than have ever been hauled with dogs in any other parts of the north. This style of hitch has absolutely gone out, as have the jerk-rein teams of the Rocky Mountains, because times have changed, and long hard trips are no longer required.

I believe a dog-team can go farther on its own food than any other team in the world. Theoretically it can travel with one man, loaded with twelve hundred pounds of food and equipment, at an average rate, from start to finish, of twenty miles a day. This is a slow average, and barring accidents, a team could travel fourteen hundred miles in seventy-three days. As the load grew lighter, the mileage would increase.

I know of an actual trip of over nine hundred miles where the dogs probably did not make over fifteen miles the first day, but wound up with a run of fifty-five miles the last day, hauling an empty sled and both men riding.

We usually reckoned on traveling about eight hours a day. Of course on a long, one-way trip of the kind I have been describing, each sled was discarded when empty. With one sled the pace became faster. The dogs were coupled closer to the sled and farther apart and either the gee-pole was used or improvised handle-bars were put on. When we were freighting and coming back empty, we piled one sled on top of another.

There were no passenger trips in those days. Everything was freight work, as 'Grub' was King. If you had a passenger he walked!

I read somewhere of the rush into the Black Hills of South Dakota years ago, where the superintendent of the stage line asked his manager how he was handling the traffic. He answered: 'Fine! First-class passengers, we carry them and their baggage. Second-class passengers, we carry their baggage. Third-class passengers, they walk and carry their own baggage.'

The nights at the way-houses were extremely interesting. The men came from almost every country in the world. Some were old prospectors from the rush of '49, and some had mined in California, South America, Australia, and South Africa. The old-time prospector was a breed by himself, with his own code of right and wrong strongly developed, which fitted in very well with this northern country, where written law was unknown.

Horse-play and tricks were of course always going

on at these gatherings. I remember reaching the Grand Central Way-House long after dark one night, and, as I was taking off my load of dog-food to carry it into the house, I met a man in the corral who was cooling his. The air outside the corral seemed to be swarming with hungry dogs, drawn by the smell of food. Inquiring about one very obstreperous dog, I was told he was Chris Sohnikson's leader, and that if I wanted to play a joke on Chris I could do so if I followed instructions.

Now Chris was extremely fond of this dog and proud because he would do a certain trick if he was given a piece of salmon. We prepared by filling the dog chock full of salmon. After we had done so I let him into the road-house, shut the door, and inquired in a loud voice whose dog it was. Chris claimed the dog, and, as he came over to let him out, I started a discussion on the merits of the beast, and Chris, as we thought he would, boasted about this trick.

I offered to bet him drinks for the house that the dog would not do it. At this, men who had already gone to bed began to swing out and march to the bar, knowing that it was a drink either way for them. The dog, being full of salmon, turned his head away in disgust, and Chris 'set up' the house. Afterwards, when we told him the joke, he was so pleased because the dog hadn't actually gone back on him that he set up the house again, and, as there were some twenty-five or thirty men and it cost fifty

cents a drink, the trick proved to be something of a luxury.

It was at this way-house that I heard the story of the tactful way in which the Indians were handled by the white men up here. This incident happened years before, and had been hushed up. Two men were prospecting one summer on the headwaters of the Tanana River, and, while coming down a small stream in a boat, were set upon by Indians, one man being killed and the other wounded. The wounded man landed on the other side of the river and eventually got back to town.

A deputation went to the Indian village. Surrounding it they called for the murderer, who of course wasn't produced, as the Indians pretended to know nothing about it. At this the white men hauled out the chief and strung him up; but before he was dead, the Indians produced a cripple as the murderer. The exchange was quickly made, and the chief freed.

The white men knew perfectly well this was not the murderer, and the Indians knew that the white men knew; but it was life for life, and the Indians had made a good bargain, which pleased them. This may seem strange, but the psychology of the Indian made it seem only justice. In the old days in the West the Indians would have been massacred, making it a war and calling for retaliation.

Circle City at this time was an interesting place. It lay on the left bank of the Yukon at the beginning

of the Yukon Flats, on a long concave bow of the river. It was built in the form of a large crescent, with its widest part in the middle, tapering off into straggling Indian shacks. The muskeg began where the buildings left off.

At a Miners' Meeting held by the men who chose the site, there was a discussion on what to call the town. 'Swatka' and 'Dawson' were being considered, when a man jumped up and said, 'Boys, we're going to have a round city. Why not call it Circle City?' — and the name took.

A more appropriate name still would have been the City of Silence. People have an idea of a 'roaring mining camp,' but in this town in the summer nothing but pack-trains plodded through the soft muck of the streets; there was no paving; no wagons, no factories, no church bells, not even the laughter of women and children. There was little or no wind in this part of the country. The screech of a steamboat's whistle in the summer, sometimes weeks apart, and the occasional howl of the dogs were only part of the great silence. In winter time the silence was still greater. Even the scrape of a fiddle playing for the squaw dances was bottled up, and everything was hushed by the snow.

A person approaching the town by water for the first time saw a steep bank with small boats of all descriptions moored along the edge. On top of the bank were piles of logs to be whip-sawed, and crude scaffoldings for this purpose, with their accompany-

THE ARMSTRONG SAWMILL

ing machinery of a man above and a man below. Then came a stretch of fifty feet or more which was the street, and on the other side were rows of log cabins, with a few larger buildings, also of logs. These cabins were moss-chinked and dirt-covered, with the exception of the warehouses, which were built of corrugated iron. In the mosquito season every cabin had its little smudge in front.

This town in summer never slept. As it was daylight all the time, people ate and slept when they felt like it. It was odd to hear a man speak of going to breakfast at ten o'clock at night. This perpetual daylight, however, got very trying after a time. Flowers sprang up as if by magic in the spring, and berries were very plentiful later. What few birds we had sang day and night. The summer, though short, was very warm.

Winter changed all this. The mud was frozen up, and the brown, dirty river turned to a sheet of white. Frost and snow hung over everything, and the cold was intense. The snowfall was very light; in fact it was mostly frost, and this seemed to be perpetually falling. It was too cold for much snow, the temperature often hanging at sixty below zero for weeks, and dropping very much farther at times.

During these cold snaps there was absolutely no movement of the air, which prickled like fine needles. The air was easily inhaled, although it gave you a burning sensation in the lungs, but I never heard of a man's lungs being frozen. Frost-bites and

freezings were prevalent, but they never bothered us unless they struck to the bone.

We had no thermometers in Circle City that would fit the case, until Jack McQuesten invented one of his own. This consisted of a set of vials fitted into a rack, one containing quicksilver, one the best whiskey in the country, one kerosene, and one Perry Davis's Pain-Killer. These congealed in the order mentioned, and a man starting on a journey started with a smile at frozen quicksilver, still went at whiskey, hesitated at the kerosene, and dived back into his cabin when the Pain-Killer lay down.

Coming in from the mines one bright moonlight night I was impressed by one of the weirdest effects I have ever seen. It was intensely cold, with not a breath of air stirring. Every stovepipe in the city was belching forth a column of fast-rising smoke which, when it cooled at a certain height, formed a sort of canopy over the entire city, with the smoke columns as posts to hold it up. From under this canopy the lights shone through the uncurtained windows, promising warmth, food, and rest.

Circle City was unique in some ways, and for more than one reason. Here was a town made up of men from all parts of the world, intelligent men all. I knew an Oxford man, a younger son, married to a squaw who had blondined her hair: he could quote Greek poetry by the hour when he was liquored up. Another man, who had been raised in the wilds of the Rocky Mountains, never drank and didn't have

a squaw, and had taught himself to read and write. In Circle City the saying went, 'If you look for a fool you find only *one*.'

Here was a town of some three or four hundred inhabitants which had no taxes, courthouse, or jail; no post-office, church, schools, hotels, or dog pound; no rules, regulations, or written law; no sheriff, dentist, doctor, lawyer, or priest. Here there was no murder, stealing, or dishonesty, and right was right and wrong was wrong as each individual understood it. Here life, property, and honor were safe, justice was swift and sure, and punishments were made to fit the case.

In the winter-time water was cut out in chunks and piled at the door, and for over eight months of the year the town was shut off from the rest of the world by ice and snow, with no means of communication save by dog-team, open only to the hardiest. The first winter I was there, only two teams went to the outside and one came in.

Letters accumulated at Juneau until some man going into the Yukon brought them up at a dollar apiece. This came rather high sometimes. I once got seventeen letters in one mail, one letter being eighteen months old. Letters were carried out in the winter for the same price and the carrier put the stamps on at the other end. This method of correspondence was rather amusing, as by the time the answer came you had forgotten what you had written about!

Locks were unknown. I remember an instance of two men arriving at a cabin which was barred from the inside. Written on the door were instructions as to how to unlock it. One of the men, a newcomer, remarked what a fool thing it was to do, and the sourdough's laconic reply was, 'Only Indians can't read and are lousy.'

Gambling was the chief relaxation, and although it sometimes led to quarrels it was on the square. Only gold dust was used as barter at the stores: this had to be weighed out for every purchase, and it was considered a matter of courtesy to turn your back while the man was weighing it. If things cost less than a dollar, you simply took more of them, making up the amount.

The saloons all ran trust accounts, and the companies gave a man his allowance of food whether he had the money or not. For some unaccountable reason a large, mounted grindstone, weighing about three hundred pounds, had been brought up on a river boat, and when all food was gone it was hoisted onto the counter as the only remaining thing to be sold. This had been the custom since the town started.

The few women who had followed their husbands into the country were a fine lot, and men looked up to them, not as their equals, but as their superiors. No man was a hero, no matter what he did, and no man was a saint, no matter how good he was. You did whatever you pleased as long as you did not bother any one else.

As an illustration of this, a man having hit it pretty high had a bad attack of delirium tremens and got very despondent. In making an attempt to cut his throat he cut too high and laid his jaw-bone open on both sides. The men who saw it stopped him; but when he was sober they informed him that if he wanted to cut his throat now he was at liberty to do so, and that they would watch him. To cover up his scars he had to grow a beard, which was black and gave him a ferocious look. His nickname from then on was 'Cut-Throat Johnson.' The Cheechakos, not knowing the story, gave him a wide berth.

We had some killings, but no murder; one case of theft, but the man never stole again. There were a few instances where men went back on their pledges, but these men were looked down upon and almost boycotted. Even claims were occasionally bought and sold verbally. A tourist, if one had happened to come into the country, would have said life here was hard and tough, with all the finer things left out, but in reality life had simply narrowed down to the Golden Rule.

CHAPTER IV

KEEPING ORDER IN CIRCLE CITY

CIRCLE CITY and the surrounding country was governed by what were called 'Miners' Meetings.' The Canadian Government, on its side of the line, had sent a bunch of North-West Mounted Police into Forty-Mile in '95, who were governing that section. In Circle City all ordinary disputes and misunderstandings, one case of stealing, a breach of promise case, and one homicide were settled by Miners' Meetings. The last meeting was held in the fall of '97, and it was the last place, as far as I know, where this procedure was acknowledged by the United States Government. The verdict of these meetings was final, and no money was involved on either side for court expenses.

The man or men calling the meeting posted a notice stating what it was called for, and it was usually held immediately. A chairman who acted as judge, and a clerk of court to take the minutes, were chosen. Then the plaintiff stated his case and produced witnesses, and the defendant replied and produced his witnesses.

In these trials the past reputation of a witness and sometimes of a principal were brought up: that is, if a man was known to be a liar or a truthful man his statements were accepted accordingly. As one

man expressed it to me, 'What is the use of leading a good honorable life if a man doesn't get the credit for it when he gets into a scrape?'

After the witnesses had been produced and examined, any one in the room could ask questions. At the end the case was summed up by the chairman and its merits discussed by any one who wished to do so. When every one was talked out, a division of the house was called for; the verdict of the majority was accepted and that was the END.

After the gold rush of '98 conditions here and elsewhere on the Yukon changed. Civilization, with its religion, laws, disorder, stealing, education, murder, social life, commercial vice, comforts, and broken pledges, crept in; justice cost money and disease raged. But before '98 life and property were safe.

No firearms were carried for protection; no prayers were said for the dead; but money was raised for the widow. The Indians were treated fairly and squarely and were honest, as no liquor was sold to them. A man could be wet or dry as he liked, and there were as many dries as in any other community. Every man had a right to his own opinions, and was not taunted for them if he did not try to force them on others. There were no hypocrites in Circle City, there was no need for them. Such was Circle City, the last stand of the Miners' Meetings.

Back in the summer of '96 an interesting event took place. There was a man in Circle City who had been in the country fourteen years and had come

from Montana, where in his younger days he had hunted the last of the buffalo. But having killed a man there he left the country and came to Alaska, gradually working his way into the interior.

He was in no way a bad man in the present sense of the word, but being a product of the early West he was a law unto himself. He was not in the least quarrelsome; in fact we always found him very good-natured. You could play almost any trick or joke on him and he would not take offense. But any insult he resented, as in the early days when the West was wild. He was absolutely honest and a great respecter of women, although he knew very few. I shall call this man Stanley, as he is still alive.

There was another man in Circle City whom I shall call Higgins. He had a very bad disposition and was generally feared when he was liquored up. Guns were not packed at that time, for everybody had to carry his stuff by dog-train in the winter and on his back in the summer, and a six-pound gun meant two days' rations. Also the climate was against quarreling.

As it happened, Stanley and Higgins got into a row, and as they were not fist-fighters they ran for their cabins to get their revolvers. Stanley getting out first, Higgins took a crack at him through his window, shooting through the glass and missing him. Then Stanley ran around behind Higgins's cabin, pulled out the moss from between the logs, squinted in, and, seeing nothing but Higgins's legs,

he creased him across the calf, not doing him any harm.

There had been a duel in Circle City the year before, and the Canadians at Forty-Mile had made cracks about the lawlessness on the American side. The men of Circle City, not wanting to justify this name, called a Miners' Meeting on these two men to stop their fighting. This Miners' Meeting was held in Jack McQueston's trading post, a log building over a hundred feet long. A chairman and clerk of court were chosen as usual, but proceedings came to a halt because neither man would make an accusation against the other.

Some men spoke of their shaking hands and making it up, some wanted to see a fight and kept quiet: but the majority didn't know what to do until Higgins, stepping out from his side of the room said, 'If Mr. Stanley will come outside with me we will settle this difficulty with no trouble to any one.' This was responded to by a stampede to the door by the two principals. It was the old idea of the 'drop,' where the first man outside would shoot the other as he came out.

Jim Belcher, the chairman, then distinguished himself by jumping out of his seat, and snapping out like the crack of a whip, 'Come back, gentlemen!' The order was obeyed just as two setter dogs obey the command of their master. Stanley and Higgins walked up the room like two church deacons coming up with the plate, step and step, with their hands on

their hips and their eyes on each other, and in front of what might have been the chancel they backed off to each side of the room.

From now on the proceedings became dramatic. The chairman gave up his chair to another man, and addressed the meeting. 'Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen! I make a motion we let these two men fight. If one is killed we will give him Christian burial; if both are killed we will give them both Christian burial. But if one survives, we'll hang him!'

Another man took the cue, and stepping forward said, 'I'll make the amendment that if either man is found dead under suspicious circumstances, the other shall be hung without trial.' Unanimous verdict.

Then Higgins stepped forward and said, 'I'll not fight under any such conditions as these, as I know I'll kill Stanley and I don't want to get hung.'

This ended the trial. But to my own knowledge these two men met each other on the sixty-five-mile trail to the mines and no harm came of it. Each man knew that if either 'turned up missing,' the other would be hanged. And I actually believe that if either man had fallen down a prospect hole or into the Yukon, the other would have pulled him out. Yet each hoped for the other's death by some means or other not traceable to him. They were brave men both, yet each was always afraid the other would either forget or take the chance.

Later, Higgins got into a row with Kronstadt, a

bar-tender, and, sending him warning through his friends that he was going to kill him, appeared in the doorway of the saloon with his uplifted gun. Kronstadt instantly drew his gun from under the bar, and, instead of raising it, fired from the level of the bar, striking his man under the eye, the bullet going out through the back of his head. By shooting in this way, he gained a fraction of a second on his opponent.

Immediately afterwards Kronstadt wrote his own notice out, calling a Miners' Meeting on himself, walked across to the trading post, pinned it up, and everybody followed him in. He was tried and acquitted in twenty minutes. Of course the ban was off Stanley, owing to Higgins's death, and to celebrate he deposited all the 'dust' he had with a saloon-keeper: it was free drinks for all as long as it lasted. Then he put on his best clothes and went to the funeral.

It should be explained that Higgins, being an old-time gunman, had used the old-fashioned 44-caliber single-action frontier Colt, and affected the fashion prevalent among some men of sawing off the trigger and filing the notch down so that the hammer would not stay up. This gun was fired by throwing the muzzle into the air, catching the hammer with the thumb on the way up, and releasing it as it came down: a man who could do this could shoot faster than a man using a double-action gun.

The one case of stealing in the country happened

in this way. Men were in the habit of poking out into the wilderness in the winter, prospecting, leaving caches on the way out to use on the way back. These caches were sacred, as men's lives depended on them; but a destitute man finding one was allowed to use it, provided he replenished it as soon as possible. If he were unable to do this himself, some one else would always do it for him.

The man in question found a cache, took what he wanted, threw the rest on the ground so that it was destroyed by animals, and failed either to replenish it or to report it on his return to town. The owner coming back, probably sooner than was expected, picked up the man's trail and just managed to get in. He found out who had robbed his cache, but waited several days to give the man a chance, and then laid his grievance before the camp.

A Miners' Meeting was called and the thief acknowledged his guilt. The unwritten law for an offense of his kind was death, but, as everybody in camp would have to put his hand on the rope and help hang him, a compromise was arrived at whereby the man was given his choice of being hanged or taking a hand-sled, without dogs, and leaving for the outside over the ice. Being a white man he chose the latter course. An Indian would have seen the hopelessness of it and chosen to be hanged.

The morning he pulled out everybody came out to bid him good-bye, and ask if there was anything they could do to help him, and wished him the best

of luck and shook hands all round. He could be seen for about six miles, till he rounded a bend in the river, the speck getting smaller and smaller as he made his way up. It was early in the season and the river was partly open, making traveling very rough and difficult. What the man's thoughts were God alone knows. Two men coming back down the Stewart River, where they had been prospecting the summer before, met him three hundred and seventy-five miles above Circle City, and were able to spare him some dried moose meat. Not knowing anything about the meeting, they tried to get him to go back with them, which of course he refused. Had he got out we should have heard of it from some of the men who came in from Dyea next spring.

There was another interesting trial, which, however, could hardly be called a Miners' Meeting. It was a breach of promise case, and, as there was a woman involved, it was decided to give it a trial by jury.

A half-breed girl and her boy cousin, who had been educated in the States, were living at this time in Circle City. A saloon-keeper proposed marriage to the girl; but because he was twitted as a future squaw-man, he crawfished. The cousin, feeling it a slight on the girl, called a Miners' Meeting to make him live up to his obligations. She was a nice girl, and the white women of the camp took her part. Interest ran high.

The trial was held in one of the large saloons.

As a compliment to the girl the bar was draped with the American flag, and the entire town turned out. A judge, lawyers, and jurymen were chosen, making a full-fledged court.

The six white women of the camp occupied one bench and sat up very straight and prim. Before court opened a man sitting next to me called my attention to the white women, most of whom were witnesses, with the remark, 'My God! Look at the mouths of those women and tell me what chance Bill's got!'

Everything went smoothly until Stanley, who happened to be on the jury, thought that something the opposing lawyer said was 'disrespectful to the lady,' and rising from his seat exclaimed, 'If you make another crack like that, I'll kill you so damned dead you'll stink!' Then realizing he had made a break he sat down, very red in the face. All proceedings stopped, and the men's faces wore varying expressions, but the women's only smiles of approval. Then the court gradually resumed business. Everybody knew that Stanley was a man of his word.

When the trial was over, the jury gave a verdict that the saloon-keeper should pay the girl six hundred dollars and marry her, or not marry her and pay her five thousand dollars and spend a year in jail. There was no jail, so another impromptu meeting was held to discuss building one in case it should be necessary. The man married the girl.

To show the diversity of cases tried here, one of the hottest ones I ever saw, which swung back and forth between laughter and tears, was on the rightful ownership of a young dog which had changed its color. It had been lost all summer and two men claimed it. The party which suffered most in this case was the dog, from frequent examinations for identification marks. The real issue of this meeting wasn't the dog, because it was worth very little; it was the principle involved, which was that justice should be done.

Gambling was always going on, and this with the squaw dances was the only amusement. As far as I know, at the only white dance that was given there were not enough white women to go round, and some dry joker invited all the squaws to come in and help out. Some one drew a chalk line down the middle of the floor, and the squaws danced on one side and the white women on the other, apparently oblivious of one another. The men, seeing the joke, danced first on one side of the line and then on the other.

These squaws danced very well, but always did so with perfectly sober faces, and, as it was beneath the dignity of the bucks to dance at all, they sat round the walls of the hall in stolid silence. I don't think there is jealousy, as a white man knows it, in the Indian's character.

An Indian woman had the misfortune to lose her young baby this summer, and while she was getting

it ready for burial and had her back turned, an Eskimo dog came into the cabin and snatching up the baby started through the heart of the town with it, with the squaw in wild pursuit, yelling at the top of her lungs. All the white men were called out by the racket and joined in the pursuit, and, as soon as the squaw saw she had helpers, she calmly turned round and went quietly home.

The men, after a mad chase, headed the dog off and made him drop the baby, and they buried it in a cheroot box a saloon-keeper gave them. The reason the white men had put themselves to the trouble of chasing the dog was because they didn't want the white women to know of it. This incident shows the indifference of the Indian woman to life and death.

A year or so after the rush I met an Indian who knew a little English, and always eked out what he couldn't say with signs. He met me one day in a great state of excitement and tried to tell me of a new animal he had seen on the trail. The conversation ran something like this: The Indian repeated, 'Horse, no horse! Horse, no horse!' and when I said, 'What?' he made signs with his hands of long things coming out of his head. So I suggested 'Cow.' But 'Horse, no horse! Cow, no cow!' was all he could say. If he hadn't got down on all fours and let out a very good imitation of a bray, I shouldn't have known to this day what he meant.

While on the subject of Indians, I should like to

say something about the natural honesty of the Indians on the river before they were spoiled by civilization. On one of my trips up the river, I had cached some food for myself and my dogs at an Indian village called 'Moss Houses,' which was deserted, as the Indians were off on a hunting trip. It was a small village of three or four houses, built of tiny poles laid one on top of the other, as the timber was very small in this section. The poles were notched together like those of a log house, and made into double walls about eighteen inches apart. The intervening space was crammed hard with moss. The roofs were covered with moss and a small amount of earth, with a smoke-hole in the middle. These made warm and comfortable dwellings.

On my return trip about a month later, I drove up from the river with my dogs, intending to stay for the night and pick up my cache. I had hardly stopped my team before the Indians swarmed out of the houses, pushed me aside, and began to unload my stuff, unharnessing my dogs and carrying everything into their houses, where they gave me a wild though sincere welcome. They built my fire for me that night, and cooked my dog-food, and we spent the evening in exchanging tobacco and talking together as well as our tongues and hands would permit. The next morning when I went to get the food out of my cache, I noticed it was gone, and the Indians, seeing me searching for it, pointed to another

cache where they had carried it for safety. I liked these people until they got civilized.

I remember a custom that had been in vogue in Circle City years before I got there. The squaws all collected on a given day with a large square made of several moose-skins sewed together, and proceeded to toss all the white men in town, one at a time, much to the astonishment of the Cheechakos, who were kept as nearly as possible in ignorance of the custom.

After the toss you were supposed to throw edibles into the skin, off which they had a 'potlatch' after the ceremony was over. It was amusing to see a Cheechako rudely yanked out of his cabin, roughly thrown into the skin, and repeatedly snapped up into the air until he didn't know which end was which. Other men, who had the chance, took to their heels and were chased all over the town by this mob of yelling squaws. No man would either help or hinder another, and it was certainly a case of 'when a fellow needs a friend,' as the squaws were none too gentle.

One remarkable case was that of Jack McQueston, who was called the 'Father of the Yukon,' as he had lived there twenty-six years. He was always honored by being tossed first. He was first allowed to escape, and then brought to bay, when a great fight ensued which lasted until he was finally conquered. When tossed up high enough so that he could turn over in the air, he always landed on his feet, and toss how they would he had never yet lost his bal-

ance. The last time the ceremony was gone through, he was thrown on his back for the first time, and the whole bunch of squaws came up and patted him with their hands to show their sympathy. He was over fifty years old at that time.

A great discussion raged this winter as to which was the warmest, to wear your furs with the hair inside or with it outside. Some men were very decided in their opinions, and a good many arguments were advanced on both sides, but one man capped the argument by saying, 'Of course it's warmer to wear the hair on the outside; if it weren't the Lord would have grown the hair on the inside of the animals.'

The year before I came into the country, a sad thing happened, showing the pluck of the white man in the wilderness. Out at the Birch Creek Mines there is a large dome-like hill which is of exactly the same shape on all sides. A great many men have been lost on it. Birch Creek makes a circle of almost a hundred miles around this dome, and most of the branch creeks head up on it.

A man by the name of Waldron Jackson went up Preacher Creek for about twenty miles to the top of this mountain for a look at the surroundings so as to be able to prospect later. It was nearly winter, and he had no dogs. Becoming confused while on top, he dropped down the headwaters of Birch Creek instead of the creek he had come up, and evidently didn't discover his mistake until he had gone too far to retrace his steps.

As he didn't come back for several days, some men followed him up with a dog-team, and as usual the trail told its own story. In one place where he had meant to build a camp-fire and spend the night, he had somehow managed to get the matches out of his pocket, but was unable to light them on account of his frozen hands, and the matches lay scattered in the snow.

From there he seemed to know where he was, and following the creek down they could see where he had stumbled and fallen, then where he had crawled on his hands and knees, and at the last where he had wriggled along on the snow. He had got to within twenty miles of his destination before he died, having traveled over a hundred miles.

One evening about the middle of December, '96, I had just got back to Circle City from a trip to the mines, and had barely lighted the fire in my cabin (I was living alone at the time) when a man came in and asked me if I wanted to make a trip to Forty-Mile, two hundred and forty miles up the river, with a passenger. I answered 'Yes,' if there was enough in it. He said he would give me two hundred and fifty dollars, and when I said I would go for three hundred and fifty dollars he agreed.

After the money was paid over, he informed me that I must say nothing to any one about the trip, start the next morning at three o'clock, and get as far as possible the first day. I thought the whole thing queer, but it was none of my business.

That night I didn't go to bed, but spent it in getting my outfit together, and went over to his cabin at three o'clock as arranged. He took me to an isolated cabin on the outskirts of the town, and a figure came out wrapped in furs. To my astonished exclamation of 'My God! It's a woman!' he replied, 'Yes, young man, and you're already paid for taking her up there!' — and I realized fully for the first time what a scrape I had got myself into. Even if I were doing something against the camp, a Miners' Meeting would have condemned me if I had gone back on my word; but to say I was surprised and chagrined is putting it mildly.

I was a green driver, and had expected to get more or less help from my passenger. The trail was absolutely unbroken, no one having been so far up-river that year. As there was no help for it, my passenger got on, sat on top of the load, and we started, my heart several degrees below zero.

I had heard tales of trips of this kind over bad ice, and many stories flashed into my head of the uncertainty of the river, as this was the first trip of this sort I had ever taken. I remember to this day how bright the stars seemed and how bleak and mysterious the river looked. I had thought there were only six white women in camp, and here was a seventh. I had no idea who she was or for what reason a woman would want to make a trip of this kind.

This trip being a fairly short one, I took only two sleds. The front sled was loaded with provisions,

dog-food, and the passenger; the other with the camp outfit. The first mistake I made was to take a slough that ran back into the country, making a wide détour, so that by nine o'clock in the morning, when all the stars had gone in, I was only six miles from Circle City by the river, and the dogs were all tired out with breaking trail.

Nothing of any interest happened until we had gone about a hundred miles up the river, my passenger alternately riding or walking behind, when, happening to look back, I discovered another team coming up on our trail, about five miles back. I called the woman's attention to it and she appeared to be frightened, which didn't cheer me any.

She asked me to wrap her up in the robe and throw a lash-rope over her: but do what I would, I could make her look like nothing but a corpse. The other team was gaining fast on me, and it didn't relieve my spirits when I found that one man was Kronstadt, who had killed Higgins the summer before, and the other one Red Thompson, rather a hard customer. When they caught up with me they asked no questions about my peculiar load, although I could see them glancing at it, and Kronstadt said that as I had broken their trail for so long, they would take the lead now.

This, in my ignorance, just suited me, my intention being to let them get ahead of me while I gradually dropped back, so that we should camp in different places. But things were really reversed.

They were breaking trail and going slow, and my dogs determined to keep up with them. I made all the excuses I could think of, stopping to fix harnesses and so on, but my dogs simply would not let the other team get away from them.

Suddenly my passenger, probably having lost patience, called out to me to let her loose. I unlashed her, and she immediately sat up on the sled. My dogs making a final rush and catching up with the front team, we all four started talking as if we had been traveling together all the time.

The two men certainly must have been surprised, but they didn't show it, and my mind was immensely relieved when I found they weren't after us. From then on until we got into Forty-Mile we traveled and camped together. The trip took fourteen days, and I delivered her at Forty-Mile without incident. She didn't volunteer any information, and not wanting to know what the trouble was I asked no questions. To this day her identity is still a mystery to me.

Many years afterwards I met a retired officer of the North-West Police who had known of my trip to Forty-Mile to deliver my unknown passenger. He told me that a short time after the journey the North-West Mounted themselves hired a team at Forty-Mile to return the lady to Circle City, but for what reason my informant didn't know. It was all a mystery, and still is, as far as I am concerned.

CHAPTER V

THE GOLD STRIKE ON THE KLONDIKE

THE night we arrived at Forty-Mile we heard for the first time of the richness of the gold discoveries on the Klondike, and the news hit us like a bombshell. Thompson, Kronstadt, and I were sleeping in the same cabin. The news excited the other two men even more than it did me because they were miners and knew the full significance of it. No one slept a wink that night.

Kronstadt and I decided to go up to the new diggings together, and combine our teams. The fifty-five miles of trail from Forty-Mile up to Dawson was extremely good, as the travel between the two towns had been heavy.

The Forty-Mile diggings lay about eighty-five miles up Forty-Mile Creek. The dog-freighters had begun as usual to run their freight out as soon as the creek was frozen over, and had accomplished more than half their work before the richness of the Klondike discoveries had been brought to light. Then of course the Forty-Mile diggings were deserted and the freight had to be hauled back again and taken up to the Klondike, and naturally freight rates jumped. This created a famine for the time being in the Klondike, and a great deal of time was wasted, and incidentally a lot of food was lost, as it had to be carried two hundred and forty-three miles in all.

When we arrived at Dawson, which was to become the headquarters of the Klondike diggings, it consisted of one small cabin built by Joe Ladue at the junction of the Yukon with the Klondike. This man Ladue had come down from Sixty-Mile, and was an old-timer, having lived in the country fourteen years. Up to this time he had never had any money, but he had foresight enough to stake the only available point on the river for a town site, and was already selling house lots, which rose to fabulous prices the next summer.

To enable you to understand the conditions of the country and how Circle City and the Klondike were linked together, I will have to give a little history of the district.

The first town of any importance on the Yukon in the early days was Forty-Mile. When the Birch Creek diggings were discovered, and their accompanying town of Circle City founded, two years before I went in, half the town of Forty-Mile went down to locate claims there. As men generally worked in couples as partners, one half of the partnership stayed up at Forty-Mile to work the old claim, while the other man went down to the new diggings. In this way Circle City was really half owned by Forty-Mile.

The men who stayed up at Forty-Mile, and some Cheechakos who had come in the spring before, went up the river to the new diggings on the Klondike, which had just been discovered by George Cormack,

in the latter part of the summer of '96, and staked claims. Cormack was an old-timer. He had been advised to prospect in this section by Henderson, who was prospecting on Indian River.

Cormack struck the headwaters of Bonanza Creek, and, following it down, made his discovery at the junction of the Eldorado and Bonanza. This creek had never been found before because it comes in behind an island in a swampy slough, about two and a half miles from the mouth of the Klondike River. I know a man who cut a raft of wood on this island, and never even knew of the creek's existence. Jack McQueston told me he had gone down the creek about twenty-six years before, but at that time he was looking for fur and not for gold. Cormack made his strike, as hundreds of similar discoveries in that country were made, by prospecting on the bars of the stream and guessing what was in the bedrock.

Cormack's Bonanza strike was made in August, I think, of that summer of 1896. There were dozens of new discoveries being made all over the valley of the Yukon, a large majority of which never amounted to anything at all. They were called 'grub-stake diggings.' After making his strike Cormack reported the discovery to the men at Forty-Mile, but nobody thought much of it. However, since Forty-Mile was more or less of a dead camp at this time, and since his strike was only a short distance away and easy to get into, most of Forty-Mile went up

there and staked claims on the chance. This was done on the strength of the surface gold that Cormack had discovered. The real richness lay on or near bedrock, twelve to fourteen feet down, and could not be tested out until later.

Just when bedrock was first reached I do not know, as no report had got down the river to us in Circle City. This was partly due to the difficulty in traveling on the early ice; also to the disinclination of the men to leave the wonderful find. When I reached Forty-Mile with my passenger at the end of December, 1896, none of the rest of us had heard of its richness. When I went back to Circle City in January, 1897, I helped to carry down the first word of it.

The rush from Circle City started at once. Later, people began to arrive from the outside by way of the passes, coming on down the river as soon as it opened. This was only the forerunner of the influx that came in 1898. The latter was a tremendous rush. It was estimated that between thirty and forty thousand people came into Dawson and that vicinity alone. This rush of 1898 was the turning-point in the history of the Yukon River and in the history of Alaska. Everything dates from it each way. Old-timers, referring to an event in Alaska, spoke of it as happening 'ten years before' or 'two years after' the 'Rush.'

The new Klondike claims could not be prospected or tested until the freeze-up, as the gold lay at a

depth of from ten to fourteen feet, under an overlay of muck and gravel. After the ground froze the miners could burn down to the gold level without fear of being flooded out, as they would have been in summer, and this is why the men who owned these claims only discovered how rich they were after the cold weather had set in.

In comparing the richness of the Birch Creek Mines with the Klondike, it is interesting to know that a prospect at Birch Creek which had yielded twenty-five cents to the pan was considered above the average, while on the Klondike they found as much as five hundred and six hundred dollars to the pan.

While the Klondike was one of the richest strikes in the world's history, the wealth which came out of the country was greatly exaggerated. Most of the gold was eventually shipped out *via* the mouth of the river, and the reports were made up from the data of the pursers on the steamers. These totals, it must be remembered, also included the money originally brought into the country. Practically every one brought in from one to five hundred dollars, which usually changed hands until it was shipped out by the traders.

The center of the Klondike diggings was about sixteen miles up Bonanza Creek, where Eldorado Creek comes in. This place was called 'The Forks.' Nobody was living at Dawson at this time, but after we had spent three or four days at the diggings

I was forced to go back for food, Kronstadt promising me half of the first claim he staked if I would bring him supplies. He ended by staking a discovery on Last Chance Creek, and giving me my half later.

Life at the new diggings certainly was crude. Most of the men lived in tents next to their prospect-holes, and worked so hard they didn't even take time to wash.

While making a trip on foot up a branch of Eldorado Creek to see if there was anything to be staked on it, I saw a rather interesting thing. I had just got above the last fringe of timber at the head of the creek, where the valley opened out into a kind of semicircle, and, looking up to see if I could locate any more stakes ahead of me, I saw a large moose coming down at a swinging trot, and twenty or thirty feet behind him was a large wolf, loping along.

They went out of sight on the other side of the timber. I looked around to see if they had crossed the belt of timber below me, when another wolf sprang up from the woods, with the evident intention of heading the moose off. On the way home, one of my large Eskimo dogs, who had been following me, saw the tracks in the snow some distance ahead, but standing lower than I did he hadn't actually seen the wolf. He made a rush ahead until he got the fresh scent of the wolf, when he hustled back to me with his tail between his legs. This

shows the fear of the Eskimo dog for the wild wolf. I had heard about wolves relaying each other in the chase of moose, which like all the deer family run in circles, but I had never before seen it with my own eyes.

Later on this same winter, I had been following the trail of a band of Indians for several days, who had been going my way on the Yukon, and finally I picked them up while going around a bend in the river. The custom of these Indians when traveling is for the squaws and old people to travel on the river with the dogs, while the able-bodied hunters prowl in the hills on either side for game.

When I caught up with them they were very much excited, showed me a dead moose just killed, and told me he had been driven onto the river by three wolves, who had killed him when he reached the rough ice. The moose was hamstrung on both sides and his throat torn out. One party of hunters arrived soon after the moose had been killed; they had struck the trail of the wolves and the moose, in the hills, and as it went toward the river they had followed it up and got there just in time to save the meat.

I saw hamstringing done next summer in Dawson by a band of five Mackenzie River Huskies. A loose horse was wandering around the town, and passed one of the company's stores, in front of which these large Huskies were lying. For some unknown reason they started to make the peculiar noise that that

breed of dog makes before they charge anything, and then they jumped up in a body, hamstrung the horse, and tore his throat out before any of the people in the crowded street could realize what was happening.

If I remember rightly, two of the dogs tackled the horse's throat, and three attacked his hind legs, and the first thing we knew the horse sat down, made no attempt to kick as far as I could see, and seemed absolutely paralyzed. The whole thing was done with incredible swiftness. Hamstringing is done by cutting the large tendon that runs over the hock. In a horse this tendon is almost as large around as a man's thumb and is very tough.

While on one of my freighting trips to the mines I heard the story of the greatest race that ever came to my knowledge. One of the laws enforced by the North-West Mounted Police at this time was that a man after staking a claim had three months' leeway in which to record it. During this time no one could jump his claim, but at the end of three months the first man to stake would hold it.

A man who had staked a claim in one of the richest sections had left the country soon after, not knowing what he had. A few men knew of his departure, but kept quiet about it, waiting for the three months to expire. If I remember rightly, the time-limit expired late in the afternoon, and some twenty or thirty men turned up, each with the idea that he was going to be the only man on the ground.

They all drove their stakes, and then a rumor was circulated that in spite of the law the first man to record it would hold the claim.

The official in charge of the recording was Captain Constantine, of the North-West Mounted Police at Forty-Mile, seventy-one miles from the spot where the claim was located. There were no dog-teams in the country, as they were all freighting stuff back from Forty-Mile. Two of the men started to make it on foot. I am sorry I don't remember their names, but one was a French-Canadian and one was an American. Their reputation as travelers was such that no man dared to compete with them. All that night they ran side by side. What rate they made I don't know, but they probably averaged a good six to seven miles an hour, if not more. As there had been so much travel between Forty-Mile and the mines, the trail was excellent.

In the early morning they drew near the barracks at Forty-Mile. The Frenchman, putting on an extra spurt of speed, beat the American in, but he did not know where Captain Constantine's room was and made two or three blunders, arousing the wrong men. The barracks were built in a hollow square, and the rooms opened directly onto it. The American, coming in almost on the heels of the Frenchman, knew where the right room was. They jumped into the doorway together and entered the office in a state of exhaustion.

Both started talking as fast as they could, with all

the breath they had left, and Captain Constantine thought he had got hold of a couple of lunatics, as both claimed to have got in first. When he eventually found out what the matter was, he refused to record the claim, waiting to see if any other men got in, and as no others arrived he gave each one an undivided half-interest. But here Fate stepped in and played them one of her tricks: the claim proved to be blank! I believe some novelist has written a story with these facts as a foundation.

Everybody had been so excited and busy trying to get down to bedrock, to find out what he had on his claim, that there had been no communication with the lower river. As a large proportion of men working at the diggings had partners in Circle City, they were very anxious to get letters down to them, and, as I happened to be the first man to go down after the new discoveries, I went back with quite a large mail, each man howling to his partner to throw over everything and come up and be rich for life.

I made the back trip without tent and stove, having sold mine on the creeks. This is the way they used to travel in the early days, and it was called 'siwashing.' When I was about a hundred miles from Circle City, I was overtaken by Hughie Day, the first United States mail carrier with the first official mail ever carried into Circle City. Not daring to take the time to go up the creeks, he had stopped at Dawson only one night, where he met

men who had told him about the richness of the country. But he had no letters to verify it, as I had them all.

He was a wonderful traveler. Being spurred on by starvation, as he had been unable to replenish his food supply at Forty-Mile, he overtook me, and, as I had enough food to get us both in, we traveled together for some days. When within a day of Circle City he asked me to lend him a couple of my best dogs, and not to hurry that day, as he wanted to get in as far ahead of me as possible. He also asked me not to say anything about his having been with me, as he was proud of his reputation as a traveler and was rather ashamed of having loitered along with me. The upshot of it was that he got into town two or three hours ahead of me.

Here he made the great mistake of telling the news of the wonderful discoveries in the Klondike. But as he had no vouchers for it, nobody believed him, which made Hughie mad. He happened to overhear some one say that 'the cold had got Hughie at last' and this made him furious. The men were sure his brain had been affected. This was the state of affairs when I got in: pity on one side, and rage and exasperation on the other.

On my arrival I went into Harry Ash's saloon, slammed my letters down on the bar, and called for a drink of beef-tea. (Dog-drivers don't drink whiskey in the winter-time.) I well remember Harry Ash, as he disregarded my order for a drink

and ran through a batch of letters until he came to one for himself.

By this time the men had heard of the arrival of another down-river dog-team, and began to come into the saloon to get the news, or maybe Hughie had mentioned me, and they came in to verify it. Harry Ash finished reading his letter, and then jumped over the bar, exclaiming, 'Boys! Hughie is right! Help yourselves to the whole shooting match. I'm off for the Klondike!'

Then began the wildest excitement, as man after man got his letter and thought he was rich for life. Harry's invitation was promptly accepted and a wild orgy began. Corks weren't even pulled, and necks were knocked off bottles. I never got my beef-tea, so I went to the cabin of a friend of mine to get something to eat, and had hardly started when the whole rabble was after me. Then for forty-eight hours there was no peace: it was questions, questions questions.

The next morning Harry Ash pulled out, and the big stampede to the Klondike had started. My batch of mail had killed Circle City in less than an hour. Cabins had been selling at a flat rate of five hundred dollars and dogs at from twenty-five to fifty dollars each. I was almost immediately offered three fine cabins for any dog I chose to designate. This either meant that a dog had gone up to fifteen hundred dollars or, what was actually the case, that cabins had dropped to about eight dollars.

Forty-eight hours afterwards, I started back to the Klondike loaded to the gunwale with food at a dollar and twenty cents a pound, and I continued freighting all winter.

Every man that started out for the new camp had to transport, in one way or another, a pretty heavy load. He had to carry several months' supply of food, knowing that it was impossible to replenish his supply until about the middle of July, when the first boats would arrive. Not only his food had to be carried, but his mining tools as well, which consisted of a pick and shovel, gold-pan, and high rubber boots, besides camp outfit and paraphernalia for each pair of men.

What dog-teams there were went first. These men made it all right, and by sending the dogs back they could bring in more men: but the high price of dogs made this very expensive. Sometimes a man brought back two or three teams empty, to be split up on arrival at Circle City: in this way the dog-teams became smaller and smaller until they got down to one dog for each man, a lay-out that is called a 'one man's dog.'

Last of all came the men without any dogs at all, pulling their own outfits. It is impossible for an ordinary man to haul more than two hundred pounds in such cold weather and average his fifteen miles a day. Two men usually went together, but each with his own sled, rigged up with a gee-pole. The two divided the camp outfit between them.

Next to packing, this is the most heartbreaking work there is. The colder the weather the harder the steel-shod sleds run, and wooden-shod sleds could not be used as they were quickly cut to pieces by the sharp ice. Some of the men relayed their stuff, and some pushed right straight through, and of course they had the advantage of the trails broken by the other teams.

Theoretically it is impossible for a man to haul his own food and live for eight months on it, but it was done, and not a single human life lost. How they got through till the eighteenth day of July God alone knows! They were all the pick of the pick, and that counted.

I made three round trips during that winter, with my freight team, hauling food. I passed these men as I was going to the diggings, met the same men on my way back, passed them again on my second trip, and I even met some of them, still on their way, when I made my last trip out in the late spring. But they all got out to the mines before the middle of May. A few days after this the river broke up.

In the spring traveling was totally different. Now it was daylight all the time and almost oppressively warm. The surface of the ice on the river had gradually become smoothed off, but as the water rose, the ice in the middle of the stream rose with it in a hump, the sides remaining frozen to the bank, and this made it look like a gigantic road with gutters on either side, down which the water rushed on top of

the ice. All traveling at that time was of course done in the middle of the river. When night came we had to leave our sleds, cross these rushing gutters with the camp outfit, and camp on the banks so as to get wood for a fire. This was not so bad as it sounds because we had a fire to dry by and the nights were not excessively cold. We always looked for a shallow place to cross with our dogs, but occasionally that could not be found and both men and dogs had to swim.

Before the ice cut loose from the banks we did our traveling by day. As the water froze at night it generally allowed us to get back dry-shod in the early morning.

It was at this time, when the ice was very thin over the gutters, that Shirley became a very important factor. I used to send him across first, over the new ice that had formed overnight, and he not only tested it for the other dogs, but would kick up a great rumpus on the farther side at my command, getting my team so excited that they would pull a man across in a light sled at a run. This newly formed ice was very elastic. Often a fast-moving sled could just get across, leaving a trail of broken ice behind it. Sometimes the ice was so thin that the dogs had to be sent across with an empty sled and the driver lay down on the thin ice and wriggle his way across, flat on his face, spread-eagle fashion. This gave him much more bearing surface, and even if the ice did crack under him he was still on top of

the water. We always did this where there was a current, and occasionally even on still water. A man is like a log, which, when dropped flat onto the water, hardly gets wet on the top side, but if dropped end on will go 'way down and be immediately swept away by the current.

Later on, when the shore ice cut loose from the banks and rose to the level of the water, making a dry surface to travel on, we moved by night, when it was coldest. This was ideal, except in the places where the water had cut the ice very thin from underneath. Save for a difference in color, these places could not be distinguished and were very dangerous.

It was more or less customary for freighters to carry a light pole crosswise in front of them, and keep their sheath-knives pulled around in front on their belts, so that if the loads broke through the ice they could throw themselves flat on the pole, grab the whiffle-tree, cut the tug-rope, and let the dogs drag them onto firmer ice. A man feels a fool, though, when he does this and it proves to be a false alarm. But when you feel the ice settling behind you, you take no chances.

With the exception of a change in color, the river remained this way until the final break-up. The break-up of the Yukon was even more spectacular than the freeze-up and was looked forward to by everybody with impatience, as it opened up intercourse with the outside world and the river boats

brought in new faces. The old-timers, in fact everybody who could, would come down to the Yukon with an excuse, real or imaginary, to see the breaking-up.

At first the river was white and smooth, with a little open water showing along the banks. As it was daylight all the time, somebody was always watching it, and so at some moment, one day, as the ice started to move, very, very slowly, the cry went up, 'Y–U–K–O–N B–R–E–A–K–I–N–G!' and it was taken up by everybody within hearing. The excitement even seemed to communicate itself to the native dogs, who joined in the din and barked and howled along the banks.

The slowly moving mass of ice gradually increased its speed until it jammed on some island or between high banks, when the whole mass crinkled up and formed a dam, against which the green rushing water would rise ten feet in as many minutes. As more ice came down it was piled onto the dam. Presently one of the huge ice-barriers that had been formed in the fall would come rolling and plunging down the river and hurl itself on this ice-dam, crushing and grinding it to pieces. The whole mass would then float down the river and form itself into a new dam, to be again swept away. This went on along the whole course of the river, and the grinding roar that accompanied it was simply terrific.

The river then formed itself into narrow lanes of rushing water between ice-canyons, the walls of

which were ground and polished smooth by the descending ice. Traveling too soon by boat after the break-up was dangerous, as in some of the ice-canyons jams had formed which were cut out from underneath, forming a bridge. If a boat got sucked under, it was smashed to pieces. Also huge blocks of ice kept dropping off the side walls, the wash from which would swamp a boat, even if the ice itself didn't strike it. A few days after the break-up of the Yukon in 1900, I was obliged to travel a hundred miles through these ice-canyons before I could make a landing.

The ice did not last long, however, once it had begun to break up. In a short time all of it disappeared, and the brief, hot, dry summer began. In the course of the year the temperature ranged anywhere from 80° below to 80° above.

CHAPTER VI

DAWSON BEFORE THE RUSH

By this time in Dawson, besides Joe Ladue's cabin, a large saloon had been built and other buildings had been started. Every one was living in tents, and, as most of the mines at this time of year were flooded and closed down for the summer and the population had streamed down to Dawson, there wasn't enough food to go around. We were all on starvation rations: in fact by the time of the break-up we were down to a diet of straight flour, and very little of that.

When the river rose and ran bank-full the one idea of every one was the arrival of the first up-river steamer. Of course we didn't know where these steamers had wintered, as there had been no communication with the towns below Fort Yukon. We couldn't tell whether they would be up at all or whether they had been smashed in the ice. One steamer that supposedly had wintered in a safe place at Forty-Mile had been completely wrecked by the ice; and whether the others, wherever they were, had met the same fate or not, we couldn't tell.

As the days wore on food got scarcer and scarcer. If a steamer didn't arrive soon, the whole town would have to go in boats or rafts or anything they could get hold of to Fort Yukon, where there was

supposed to be plenty of food. The amount of help given that winter in sharing food that money couldn't buy was remarkable. Food was priceless, but there was no price on it. This was the 'Starvation Camp' that the people on the 'outside' never heard of. The next winter, when food went up to terrific prices, there was no such scarcity.

On the eighteenth day of July, a memorable day for us, the whistle of a steamer was heard below the bend in the river, and it was answered from all over town by yells from the men and howls from the dogs. Every one knew that the camp was saved. In less than an hour the old Bella was tied up to the bank, loaded equally with liquor and food, which were rushed ashore immediately. What few saloons there were opened up with free drinks: the ban was off, and *everybody* got drunk. This included the temperance men. But the crowd was good-natured, and there were no fights except among the dogs, who seemed to realize that something of importance was up and celebrated in their own way.

During the famine the dogs had fared the worst, and had lived on boiled green hides and everything that is inedible for human beings. In fact, all but the best were killed to reduce their numbers. It had been the custom in Circle City for the white men to shoot all but their very best dogs when sledding broke up, rather than let them go through summers of starvation and suffering as the Indians did. The dogs were replaced by later boats which brought

fresh dogs from the mouth of the river, where there was plenty of seal and salmon during the summer.

Activity in Dawson now became very great, as more steamboats came up the river bringing more people and more food. These boats were of the old stern-wheel type, but of modern construction; the side-wheeler being unfit for this river. Some of these steamers, the old Bella among them, were able to push barges up in front of them. A barge was never towed, as short cuts were often taken across sand bars and it was apt to get stuck. A draft of four feet was about the limit for all craft that had to get across the shallow Yukon Flats.

The deck hands and pilots were Eskimos and Indians, and twenty or more pilots were used on the eighteen hundred miles of river traversed by the steamboats. An Indian or Eskimo knows his own stretch of water better than any one else, but is almost worthless when you put him on a new piece of river. Later, white pilots were used entirely, and these under all conditions were more satisfactory than the natives.

Practically all the white pilots came up from the Mississippi River. The owners of the boats also tried having Mississippi River mates as well as pilots, but these were not a success, as they didn't understand driving the Indians and Eskimos, who had to be handled quite differently from the negroes.

Crowds of small boats were pouring into Dawson

from the upper river also, bringing women, supplies, horses, and mules, the forerunners of the rush of the coming summer. The town of Dawson was growing by leaps and bounds, and building was going at top speed. It was still a canvas city, but houses were being built around the tents and business went on uninterruptedly. Some of these buildings were probably the largest log structures in the world, often being three stories high and fifty feet by one hundred and fifty feet, the full size of a house-lot.

Dance-halls, saloons, and gambling-halls were running at full blast. Dawson, being in the Canadian Yukon, was under the jurisdiction of the Mounted Police, a new detachment of which had just come in, and this wonderful body of men kept very good order. There was none of the lawless element that came in later. Like Circle City this town never rested, day or night.

Our laundry work was seldom done and to get our clothes washed cost almost as much as new ones. Clothes were not especially high at this time. So it became our custom, if we were in town near the source of supply, to wear our clothes till they were dirty and then throw them away. One day a French Canadian came around with some second-hand shirts that were nice and clean and mended, and sold them to us; but soon a man discovered that he had bought his own shirt, and we made the chap own up that he had been collecting the dirty shirts that had been thrown away, washing them, mending them,

and selling them back to us. In most cases I guess he earned his money.

The situation of Dawson offered more natural advantages than that of any other town site on the river. It was in the shape of a flatiron, with the nose pointing downstream, ending in high bluffs. Along the front was the Yukon; on the other side a range of hills ran back to the Klondike River, which cut across at the heel of this flatiron and flowed into the Yukon.

The Klondike was a clear, swift stream, and, as I remember it, was about a hundred yards wide at its junction with the Yukon. This cross-current coming into the big Yukon made a heavy back eddy all the way down the front of Dawson until it struck the bluff at the end. This made it very convenient for the landing of steamboats and rafts.

Bonanza Creek, on which the mines were, came into the Klondike two miles and a half above its mouth, on the opposite or left bank, which made it necessary to cross the Klondike sooner or later to get to the mines. At first this was done by ferries run by the current, or boats rowed across: later a suspension bridge was thrown over, and of course in winter the river was crossed on the ice.

The Klondike was swift and froze up later than the Yukon. The ice was smooth and black at first, but soon was covered with tufts of frost that looked like miniature frost-trees. These turned the surface of the river to a sheet of white. One morning we saw

the track of a man drawing a hand sled down the middle of the river, and then a jagged black hole in the ice which had just frozen over, and no tracks leading out, telling its own story. Who this unfortunate chap was nobody knew.

My best friend, Fred Fay, had a harrowing experience here, though it turned out all right. He borrowed my team of dogs, which he had never driven before, went around the mouth of the Klondike on the thick Yukon ice, and up to the mines. Next day, coming back, he took a short cut and struck the Klondike about ten miles up, intending to follow down the left bank. He was lying on the sled with his feet toward the dogs and leaning on his elbow, when my wolf leader, instead of following the trail along the bank, which was used at this time of year, swerved out onto the newly frozen ice in the middle of the river.

The whole thing was done in an instant, and as my partner couldn't manage my dogs, before he realized what had happened or could check them they were scurrying down the middle of the stream. Once on the smooth ice they struck a tremendous pace. Glancing back he saw the water creeping up behind him over the ice, turning it black, and knew that if he stopped or slackened his pace he would break through. Knowing my dogs were unmanageable, he didn't dare to try and turn them toward the shore.

The dogs traveled ten miles before they swerved

off of their own accord to the town of Dawson. He never would drive my dogs again, and said he was so frightened all the way down that he didn't even shift his position on the sled.

This same winter Bolton, the confidential clerk of the gold commissioner, did one of the noblest acts I have ever known of. Men would often bring in the legal papers of claims so late at night that it would be impossible to record them until the next day. As they were too valuable to leave in the office, Bolton would take them home with him to his cabin rather than run any risk of the men losing their claims, which they would do if the papers were lost before the claims were properly recorded.

His cabin lay across the Klondike River in a small angle named Klondike City. We called it 'Louse Town' because an Indian Village had stood there years before. Starting home one night after dark, evidently thinking the ice was firm enough to hold him, he broke through about halfway across. Knowing something about traveling in that country, he had evidently thrown himself face downward when the ice cracked under him, so he wasn't dragged under, and thus worked his way to the other shore, breaking the ice in front of him until he got into shallow water on the other side.

Here he became exhausted, and being afraid that he would be swept away, threw the papers, along with a picture of his wife, onto the firm ice ahead of him. He was found next day with his head and

LOUSE TOWN, WITH DAWSON IN THE BACKGROUND

shoulders out of water, frozen in solid. I think this made more impression on me than any other brave act I ever heard of in Alaska.

This summer, that of '97, I was working for the Alaska Commercial Company as head stevedore. It is rather amusing how I got this job. I was skidding some house-logs down off the steep hills at the back of the town for a friend of mine, and as it was a very rough, hard slope the task called for a good deal of loud language. In that still country my voice must have rung over the whole town site.

Joe Ladue asked who it was, and, on being told, said: 'I would like to have that man work for me. A man who can swear as loud as that ought to be able to do something.' Just then a new superintendent came along inquiring for a foreman, and I was recommended to him, my only recommendation being the strength of my lungs and my language.

As the river steamers came in, it was my job to see them unloaded as quickly as possible, regardless of expense, so that they could get started down-river for another trip. As there were no facilities for unloading, everything had to be carried to the warehouses on men's backs, and so there were two lines of men coming and going all the time, and the pace was a very fast one.

The system of keeping the men's time was unique. Men were hired on the hour and the half-hour, and tabs with their name and the hour they began work were given them. If a man became tired or

wanted to stop for a meal, or if he slackened in his work, he was immediately discharged and his quitting time put on the same tab and signed. If he wanted to go to work again later, after eating or resting, a new tab was given him. Very often before the boat left a man would have three or four tabs, which he cashed in at the company's store for gold dust. This method saved time, as no books were kept. Wages were $1.50 an hour.

When a boat was nearly unloaded, and it wasn't practicable to let the tired men go and hire new ones, the whole crew were stimulated with free drinks from the company, to get every last ounce out of them. With a large crew we once ran off in this way about eight hundred tons in thirty hours. This was in no way 'nigger-driving.' The men came from every walk of life and all parts of the world, and were the last men in the world to be driven. Indeed they liked it, as they were free to stop work and begin again whenever they wanted to, and they were well paid.

In spite of all the food that had come in during the summer before navigation closed, the companies saw there would be a scarcity that winter. The river having dropped very low had cut off the last few boats that would have come in over the Yukon Flats. At this juncture I was ordered to go down on one of the boats to Fort Yukon, with a picked crew, and try to get up with a light load of food that had been cached there.

I picked out twenty-six men, the very best. They were chosen for their brawn, their capacity to stand hard work, and their quickness, and, strange to relate, six of them were lawyers. Captain Hanson, the superintendent of the company, went down with us. His purpose in making the trip was to get a rest.

The trip down was uneventful, except for the songs, dances, and story-telling. The Eskimo deck hands were enlisted for these dances, as there were no women on board; but, as it was beneath the dignity of a male Eskimo to impersonate a woman, the white men had to tie bandanna handkerchiefs around their heads and be the women. This was rather amusing, as the Eskimos ran from four to five feet high and one of the lawyers was six feet seven inches tall.

I took a case of whiskey down for the crew, when the work of loading should begin. But I soon noticed signs that made me examine my stock, whereupon I discovered that only two bottles were left. These I threw overboard.

Arriving at Fort Yukon, we made a record loading and starting up the river, but after about twenty miles we stuck on a sandbar, as the water had gone down still more. We tried every scheme possible, such as working the boat over with 'sheer legs'; running a cable from a point on an island back onto the capstan; turning and trying to back up with the wheel ahead to fan the channel, which tends to drag water down under the boat and lift it up. But all to no avail.

So with a worn-out crew we ran back a few miles and unloaded half the cargo on an island, where we cached it; then we tried the sandbar again with the same result, as the water had dropped still more. So there was no course left but to run back to the island, unload completely, and try to get back empty. But we stuck again, as the water was steadily falling. Then we went to Fort Yukon to hold a council of war.

Captain Hanson decided to hire Indians to take him the three hundred and eighty miles to Dawson in a birch-bark canoe. He wanted to warn the people of Dawson that no more food could get up the river that fall, and that those who didn't have enough food to last them through the winter would have to leave and go down to Fort Yukon.

Three of my crew owned claims in Dawson and had to get back. These men built a poling boat and in a few days followed Captain Hanson. The rest of the crew were promised free transportation to 'Frisco, if they would go down the river on our steamboat and catch an ocean steamer at St. Michael's.

That left two of us, another man and I, as free lances, to go up or down or stay where we were, as we liked. As my wages were fifteen dollars a day, regardless of what I was doing, until I got back to Dawson, I decided to stay down there, buy a lot of dogs, and drive back over the ice loaded with provisions as a speculation. But first I would have to go up to the island where we had cached our cargo

from the steamboat, and make the cache fit for winter.

The only boat we had for this latter purpose was one of the steamer's lifeboats, built in the shape of a mud turtle and about the most unhandy kind of a craft that ever was taken upstream. It was impossible to pole this boat, so it had to be towed the whole way, and when we struck swift water it reared up in front and took most of the river along with it. It was a great test of temper and we all lost our chance of going to heaven on this trip.

We were at the end of the Yukon Flats, where the river is tremendously wide and is blocked by thousands of long narrow islands. Between these the stream is from a few feet to half a mile wide, and the current is very swift. The islands were heavily wooded for this country. We tracked up the whole way from island to island: that is, we pulled up on one island and towed along until we got to the end of it, and then got in and rowed madly across the stream, drifting fast, until we hit another island about midway, and repeated the process.

By sheer good luck we located the island where our cache had been left. We were tracking up the opposite side of the stream, which was about a quarter of a mile wide, and were preparing to drop down to it, when a wild-looking figure appeared, dancing up and down on the island, making frantic signals for us to come across. We waved back and kept on going, as the island was not a large one and

we had to get well above so as to be able to drop back and make it. The figure kept following opposite us till it got to the end of the island, when after a fresh burst of signaling it stopped and watched us, still tracking up the opposite shore.

When we were a sufficient distance upstream so that we could row across with some chance of making the island, we started over and barely made it. The lone figure meanwhile was tearing down the bank toward us, wading into the water at the end of the island in his eagerness to catch the boat and not have us swept by. At this point we discovered it was Captain Hanson. At the same moment he recognized us, and I think I never saw a man so glad to see his fellow men.

His story was this. The birch-bark canoe in which he had started began to leak badly. The two Indians who were taking him to Dawson decided they would leave him on the island with the cache and go and get another canoe. This seemed all right to Captain Hanson.

But the Indians failed to come back. The poor man had been marooned for four or five days with no axe and no bedding. There were three or four hundred tons of provisions, but they were mostly in cans. He had made himself a house by piling up packing-boxes and had spent most of his time watching for relief and reading the labels on the boxes. If he had only had an axe he could have made a raft and taken his chance floating down to Fort Yukon.

This little incident changed all my plans, as Captain Hanson decided we should have to take him up to Circle City where he could get another canoe or boat and more Indians to relay him the rest of the way to Dawson. Having him along helped us, as it gave us another man on the tow-line, but even then it was desperate work. Going around some of the riffles where the water was swift, Captain Hanson lugged my pet collie Shirley in his arms so that he would not be swept downstream.

We now had our first snow of the winter, about six inches. This made it much harder walking over the rocky beach, and as it was freezing every night and we were wet through most of the time, it was a very disagreeable trip. But we had the satisfaction at our camps of having a big fire to dry out by. Four days after we left the island, we got to Circle City. This was the very best time we could make, as sixteen miles a day was about our limit.

Here Captain Hanson got another birch-bark canoe with a fresh lot of Indians, and started for Dawson next morning, leaving orders for the two of us to follow him by any means we could. The only canoe that we could buy in Circle City was a birch-bark, and it leaked so badly we decided to cover it with canvas. This took us a couple of days, and the river for some unknown reason began to rise. The old-timers then prophesied that another steamboat would get up.

CHAPTER VII

WINTER ON SHORT RATIONS

CONDITIONS at Circle City at this time were as follows. There were only eighty men left in the district, and they were all in the town itself, as the mines had to be closed down for the winter. No food had been left at Circle City by the passing river steamers since the year before. It had all been taken upstream to Dawson, where prices were higher, each boat promising that the next boat would leave provisions. So these eighty men were marooned, with no food, and with the season practically closed. There was no danger of actual starvation, as they could make their way back to Fort Yukon, eighty miles down the river. But if they did that they couldn't work their mines the next summer, as it would take them all winter to get their food up to Circle City and the summer to pack it on their backs out to the mines.

The rising of the river gave them some hope that another boat would get up, but whether the boat would leave provisions or not they had no means of knowing. A Miners' Meeting was called, I think the last Miners' Meeting on the Yukon, and it was decided that if another boat came up and stopped at Circle City, the captain would be asked politely to put eighty outfits of food ashore. If he refused,

the eighty miners would compel him to do it. In case the boat didn't stop, it was to be headed off at 'Fish Camp' where the river narrowed down, a move that could easily be done by shooting a shot or two through the pilot house, as the boats made very slow time at this point. The food was to be paid for at Dawson prices.

I think it was the next day that the Portius B. Weir came around the bend and headed straight for shore. It reminded me of some large animal approaching a hunter. There was always the chance that at the last moment she would turn and run downstream. Unsuspecting, she pushed her nose into the bank, and a deck hand made her fast with a cable. The gangplank was swung out and the superintendent of the company walked ashore.

He was immediately surrounded and the case was put to him, very politely. Refusing to comply, he turned and ordered the captain to have the line thrown off. A deck-hand, walking up a couple of hundred feet to the place where the hawser was hitched to a stump, to carry out the order, was very much startled when twelve men confronted him with Winchesters over their arms. He walked back with his hands stuffed deep into his pockets, his head high in the air, whistling loudly. One of the pilots, approaching the fore part of the boat with an axe to cut the rope, was warned by the same twelve men and went back in a hurry.

Negotiations were then opened, but instead of

giving in with good grace the superintendent refused to allow the men any food on the ground that it was all bonded for the British side. The boat was held three days, every minute of which was valuable because the season was already late and, if the ice once began to run in the river, it would be absolutely impossible for her to get anywhere.

It was eventually settled by the miners themselves going into the hold and unloading eighty outfits of food, which were taken into the company's store and immediately paid for in cash. Each man was paid by the storekeeper for the time he had worked in unloading the boat. I think this was the most decorous hold-up I have ever heard of. It must be understood that the steamboat and the store were under the same company.

I saw an amusing incident while the boat was being held up. A newspaper reporter, together with an artist whose name was Max Newberry, had been sent out by a large New York newspaper. These men had made the trip around by the ocean, coming by water all the way from Seattle. They were looking for local color and had seen nothing but Indians and Eskimos so far. But here was local color with a vengeance for the press-man.

The artist, not to be outdone by his brother in arms, set up his easel on the forward deck of the boat and went to work. He had for his picture the twelve men with rifles, who were relieved by another shift every few hours, the Indians on shore, the

Eskimo deck-hands, quite a large proportion of miners, the captain and the superintendent. He even put in half of Shirley.

The artist was a clever one, especially at making portraits. When the picture was almost finished, a miner who was watching made the remark that he had got in most of the men's portraits pretty accurately. The miner recognized them and called them by name, much to the edification of the artist. Then he went on to criticize the men's faces, saying, 'Don't you think Jim So-and-So would be better looking if you straightened out that broken nose of his?' or, 'The only reason that So-and-So didn't have any whiskers was because he couldn't grow any,' etc.

These remarks went on in the most earnest way, much to the surprise and amusement of the artist, until he suddenly realized that he had made accurate portraits of the ringleaders, and that if any trouble came of this food-requisitioning escapade, these men could be recognized and arrested. He turned pale when he saw the possible scrape he had got himself into. Men, he had heard, were easily lynched in that country. So he hastily rubbed out all the faces and substituted fresh ones, under the supervision of the old-timer.

That night, still looking for local color, the artist wandered into a saloon, and the men seeing they had a Cheechako in their midst, decided among themselves that they would give him what he was looking

for. So one man, who pretended to be lushed up, began to shoot the pictures on the wall. The bartender ordered him to stop, pulled a gun from under the bar, and shot up in the air. That was the signal for every one to produce a gun and start shooting, and I should have hated to be on the roof that night. Those were black-powder days and the room was full of smoke.

When two or three men tumbled down to the floor, it looked like the real thing. Not being able to get out, as the crowd was concentrated around the door, the artist chap put on a bold front and stood up, instead of crawling under the bar or behind the table. By so doing he won the admiration of all the men, and before he went up on the boat he was one of the most popular men in town.

When the outfits were finally unloaded and the boat allowed to go, our chance was at hand to be taken up to Dawson. But here we ran across another snag. The superintendent refused to take us because we belonged to the rival company; and considering what he had just been through I don't think I blame him. Our party now consisted of five, having been joined by men from Circle City who wanted to go up, so we boldly walked on board and defied him to put us off, knowing pretty well that the white deck-hands would take our part rather than get the enmity of the whole river. We didn't run any risk, as the Eskimo deck-hands and Indians didn't count either way.

Not wanting any more trouble than we already had on our hands, I had sneaked my dog Shirley into the engine-room when no one was looking. When we had been out about twenty-four hours, the superintendent asked me if I had a dog on board, to which I replied that I had. He then said that it was bad enough to be compelled to take passengers up, but he'd be damned if he would take a dog, and told me to chuck him overboard.

There is a saying in this country that a man may not fight for his wife, but he'll always fight for his dog. Anyway, I informed the superintendent in my most polite manner that before he chucked the dog overboard he would have to do the same to me, and before he did that there were four of my companions who would have to go overboard too, and he had better begin because he had quite a job on his hands. With that he flunked and said that if I had to take the dog I should have to pay for his passage. I told him that he could hand his bills in to the Alaska Company because they always paid Shirley's wherever he went.

My seat at the table was at the captain's right. That day at dinner I moved down one peg and put Shirley in my old seat, with a bandanna around his neck as a napkin, and when the superintendent came in I thought he would burst. He didn't say anything, but he looked black.

However, I must say the good heart of the man came out next day when he made friends with

Shirley and fed him out of his own plate, though I think that this was partly due to Shirley's ingratiating manner. This little act of the superintendent thawed the ice with all of us, until another complication arose when we overtook the poling boat that had started ahead of us. When the superintendent was informed that they were our friends, he refused to pick them up. However, the Indian pilot of the steamer ran the boat over and picked them up on his own responsibility.

With the exception of stopping to kill a bear, there were no excitements until we reached Dawson, which we did only an hour or so after Captain Hanson arrived. He had made one of the hardest trips on record, traveling literally night and day, to warn the men at Dawson to leave while there was time. It was one of the finest acts I ever saw done in the country. As we came up he was in the middle of an address to the crowd, warning them of the famine and telling them that no boat could possibly come up. He was almost set at naught by our arrival. But this trip bore fruit. A large number of men decided to leave for the lower river, as even our boatload and that of the old Bella, which followed closely on our heels, weren't enough to relieve the famine, for both were loaded very lightly.

The minute the old Bella arrived it was my time to go to work. Not only hours but minutes counted, as the second run of ice had begun to come down the river, and it was only a matter of time till the boat

had to seek a place of safety to hole up in. I hired the largest crew I possibly could work. Freight began to come out rapidly, and the men seemed to realize the importance of hurrying. As darkness came on nothing stopped and the speed seemed to increase.

The night was bitterly cold and the water had frozen over lightly between the boat and the shore. A young man from Chicago, who had never seen anything of rough life, was working with the crew. In his hurry to keep ahead of the running stevedores he made a misstep, dropped about eight feet onto the ice below the gangplank, and went through. A young fellow just behind him threw his load off and jumped in after him, just saving him from being swept under the ice.

Now it had always been my policy to give the men a bonus for especially good work. Although this happened in the early evening, I paid the rescuer for an entire night's work, gave him a bottle of whiskey, and sent him home. Another young fellow who had seen this little by-play, watching his time when no one was looking, picked up a dog, jumped over, and came ashore with the dog in his arms. The fact was that the dog wasn't heavy enough to break through the ice and could have got ashore alone, even if he had fallen in. But when the man appeared before me soaking wet, with the dog (my dog!) in his arms, there was nothing to do but to treat him as I had the other man. Later the boy told me how he had worked me.

Stimulating the men with whiskey was not so bad as it sounds. Every one knew the importance of haste in unloading the boat, and a little stimulant only helped them. The only time it ever went wrong in my experience was when I was unloading my first boat. That day I was trying to work about twenty Eskimo and Indian deck-hands. Not understanding their language or habits, I first got hold of the mate and asked him how to work them. His reply was, 'Sure, boy, never hit one unless you kill him, because he'll knife you later on, or else the whole gang will suddenly disappear. Swear at them all you like, poke them out with long sticks from any corner they may get into, jolly 'em along with a little drink now and then, and when they see you mean business they'll work for you.'

It was a crime to give liquor to an Indian or Eskimo on the lower river, but not up here. All for a good cause I tried this method and it worked splendidly for a little while. I didn't realize, however, how small the capacity of an Eskimo is, having gauged it by that of a white man. The first thing I knew, the entire crowd had gone crazy, dancing, singing, and making all kinds of bird and beast noises. Some of them were really quite wonderful at it. Then one proceeded to jump into the river.

Stopping the entire work and getting together all the white men, we trussed up the Eskimos and Indians by tying a rope around each one, under his arms, with the knot coming between the shoulder

blades where he couldn't get at it. Throwing the other end over the beams on the upper deck, we left them with their feet just touching the floor.

I was suggesting to one of the stevedores that we put guy lines on to keep them steady when Captain Hanson, the superintendent, arrived on the scene. It is the only time I have ever seen him show surprise. As far as I was concerned I should rather have seen the devil, as I had been hired only a few hours and wanted to make a good impression. With his hands thrown up, he said, 'Mr. Walden, what in the world is the meaning of this?' and I managed to stammer out, 'I think they must have got hold of some whiskey somewhere.'

We let them down and they lay still. Then they practiced a new method of curing a jag: this was to pour water down each other's ears and up their noses. This was my first attempt to work Eskimos.

Both the Bella and the Portius B. Weir left the following day loaded to the gunwales with refugees for Fort Yukon, where there was plenty of food. Besides these, a multitude of small boats and scows, and every conceivable thing that could float, took their chances in drifting down the river.

I heard later that these hungry men made life miserable for the man who was in charge of the food at Fort Yukon. The refugees were mostly men who had come into the country that summer, had no money, and couldn't pay for their food. At the meeting that Captain Hanson was haranguing when

we arrived on the Weir with food, he promised that all the men who went down without money should have free allowance at Fort Yukon. A representative of one of the San Francisco newspapers promised one hundred thousand dollars for their food. But the man in charge at Fort Yukon didn't have any orders to this effect, and tried to get the men to cut wood for it. Whether or not these men helped themselves, I don't know, but I do know that none of them starved to death.

I should like to add another incident here to prove the generosity of the miners. Father Judge, a Jesuit priest who had won the respect and love of every man in the country, built a hospital in Dawson, borrowing the money from the Alaska Commercial Company, which was controlled by Jews. They lent it to him on the security of his bare word. After Captain Hanson's meeting about food was over, and while the crowd was still animated, Father Judge took the stump and informed everybody that the hospital was practically finished, and that any one needing its services would be welcome and treated as well as possible, whether he had any money or not. He said it had cost him thirty-five thousand dollars (carpenters were twenty dollars a day, and lumber two hundred and fifty dollars a thousand), and that his Church would pay for all this, but that he would like to send back word to them that the men of Dawson appreciated his hospital, and he would like to pass round the hat.

That hat was immediately filled with gold-sacks, or pokes of loose gold, and checks written on the backs of envelopes to the Alaska Commercial Company, which did a kind of banking business for us. After his hat was filled, more hats were called for and were filled, and the Father got not only the amount he needed, but a great deal more besides.

Whenever Father Judge had to make a visit to an outlying district, we drove him across with our dog teams. Although he always wanted to pay us, we never accepted it. I was driving him one day, and, while running along beside my team on the hard trail, I happened to stub my toe. I am afraid my language was more or less questionable, and I apologized to the old man for having forgotten whom I had for a passenger. His reply was this: 'See here! A priest is no different from any other man, and your language to me shouldn't be any different. I know very well you didn't mean any disrespect to the Almighty, and He probably won't lay it up against you: it was just letting off steam. He will probably forgive you if you keep your word, are true to your partner, and don't get drunk any oftener than you have to. Men who do that are the kind of men we want.'

He broke me of swearing for some time. This old man certainly understood us, and every one who came his way got some benefit from him. Later on Alec MacDonald, known as the 'King of the Klon-

dike,' built a chapel for him, under the altar of which the old man was subsequently buried.

One day Captain Hanson told me rather an amusing tale about an adventure that he had one summer in the Aleutian Islands. He was captain of a small tug at the time, with a crew of four or five. It was an old tug and could make only about eight miles an hour. They were cruising around the islands on the company's business when one of the crew yelled out, 'Dead sea otter on the port bow!'

Now the custom in that section was this: If a number of men, while on the water, caught a sea otter, the man who first got his hand on it received half of what the pelt was sold for. A prime pelt was worth from two thousand to twenty-five hundred dollars at that time.

At the cry of 'sea otter' the dory was drawn up and every man on board jumped into it with the exception of Captain Hanson. He was about to jump in when he realized that the engineer in his hurry had forgotten to stop the boat, which would have gone off without them and left them in Behring Sea. So he stayed on board and steered the boat around in a circle, not knowing how to shut it down, and finally picked the dory up with a rope. Nothing was got out of all this, however, as the pelt was too far gone to be any good.

The latter part of the summer of '97 the captain on one of the up-river boats brought along a monkey and a parrot. This caused both consternation and

amusement to the Eskimo deck-hands, who kept the captain informed day and night what the monkey was doing, much to his disgust. The monkey had free run of the boat. I was on board at the time, and to see what the Eskimos thought of the monkey, I asked one of the deck-hands what sort of animal it was. At first he thought I was joshing him, but when I swore up and down that I had never seen one before, and asked him again what it was, after a good deal of thought he replied, 'Little bit all same Injun, little bit all same dog.' The parrot was bought by a man on the trail where all the pack-trains passed, and it wasn't long before he beat the mule-skinners at their own language.

Early this winter a fire broke out one evening in one of the saloons in Dawson, and before it had burnt itself out it had destroyed the heart of the city. All the buildings were of logs, and some of them three stories high. The fire was very hot while it lasted and, as there were no chimneys or foundations, the city being built on perpetually frozen ground, there was absolutely nothing left.

The Alaska Commercial Company saved their building by opening bale after bale of blankets, covering the whole building over, and keeping the blankets saturated with water. The only water supply was that which could be dipped up by pail from the Yukon River.

In the saloons and business houses, the ashes of the place where the cashier sat and weighed out gold

dust were panned out, so that practically no gold was lost. But a lot of provisions were burned up, making the scarcity of food a great deal worse. The fire was hardly out before rebuilding of the town began.

There was a pet donkey in town called 'Wise Mike,' who was the survivor of a burro train of the previous summer. At one time he had traveled with a circus and he knew a good many tricks. He had spent his time before the fire traveling from saloon to saloon. He was always welcome, was fed by the different saloon men, and would lie down by the stove like a big dog. It became the custom, when some miner from the creeks arrived in town and had had a few drinks, for the saloon-keeper to ask him if he wouldn't kindly kick 'that damned jackass' out, as he had been there all day. Then the fun began.

At the first kick Wise Mike would rear up in his wrath and attack the man, much to the amusement of the surrounding crowd. As there was no use trying to punch him, it generally wound up in a wrestling match, the donkey standing on his hind legs and striking at the man, squealing, but never attempting to bite, and the man trying to throw him off his pins and lug him out.

A really sober man was never asked to do this, and the sympathy of the surrounding crowd was always with the donkey. I have seen a bystander play foul in the donkey's favor by tripping the man up. After vanquishing his opponent, Wise Mike would either

saunter out slowly, just to show he could go out by himself if he wanted to, or he would go back and lie down by the stove and go to sleep again. After the big fire, since Wise Mike had no home, and since food was very scarce, some kind friend shot him.

It was advertised at one of the dance-hall saloons that fall that a young girl would auction herself off to the highest bidder. Of course this was rather a unique event, so there was a large attendance at the saloon. When the auction opened, the girl was dressed in the usual garb of the dance hall, which was the latest Parisian fashion. She was assisted onto the bar and stood there while the auctioneer expounded the terms of the auction, which were, as far as I can remember, that she was to live with the highest bidder as his wife for the winter, doing his housekeeping. He and she were to act in every way as a married couple for the duration of that time. The money was to be deposited with one of the big companies, not to be paid to her till after the expiration of the time allotted. If this proved unsatisfactory to either party, the one breaking it lost the money put up. Courtesy and good treatment were called for on both sides.

The bidding was sharp, as even the men who didn't want her liked the idea of being in it. It gradually got down to a few, and when the bidding showed signs of lagging, the girl was asked to walk up and down the length of the bar. There was no-

thing indecorous on either side. It was her right not to accept a bid if she didn't like the man. She was eventually knocked down for somewhere round five thousand dollars. How they came out I never heard.

As winter came on there was absolutely no chance of any more food arriving, and, the scarcity being made much worse by the fire, prices rose terrifically. For instance, flour which had been selling at six dollars a sack went up to a hundred, which means at the rate of four hundred dollars a barrel. Candles which had to be used in the mines went up to a dollar apiece. Bacon was a dollar and a half a pound. Beans a dollar a pound.

Kerosene and whiskey were priced at fifty dollars a gallon, but the whiskey was very weak. As one old man expressed it to me, with tears in his eyes, 'I used to be able to get drunk for an ounce, and now it takes over a hundred dollars!'

It was impossible to buy any dog-food for less than a dollar a pound, and dogs themselves ranged from three hundred to five hundred dollars apiece. One man sold a team of five splendid dogs for twenty-five hundred dollars. Many men in the camp who had never had any money in their lives before were now rich. But they had nothing to buy with the money. Gambling was very prevalent, and the play ran fabulously high.

The first half of this winter I spent in freighting up to the mines and back, and in long solitary trips

to outlying creeks where men who thought they had made more or less rich discoveries wanted food taken out to them. Some of these trips were from one hundred to two hundred miles long. The prospectors had poled up in the summer to the mouth of some river, and then followed it up, prospecting all the way. Some trips, as the prospector had made them, were like following two sides of a triangle. They could be shortened in winter by cutting across corners. This necessitated traveling over country which at that time no white man had ever seen before, and although they were hard trips, they certainly were interesting.

At first traveling without tent or stove was practiced a good deal. Later the tent and stove crept in as a much easier and more satisfactory method, although on looking back on it, I dare say it was less picturesque. In a country where there was plenty of timber and little or no wind, it was possible to make a camp-fire, which was in some ways more comfortable than the tent and stove, but involved more labor. This extra labor counted a good deal after a hard day's trip, and to offset it the extra weight of tent and stove was only a few pounds.

In making an open camp we selected two trees from four to six feet apart, and started a fire in the middle and just in front of them. A back wall was then built up against the trees by piling logs one on top of the other to the height of a man. This acted as a reflector. The fire was replenished by piling on

green logs about eight feet long. After that we laid boughs down in front of the fire for a bed. A windbreak of a sled-sheet or boughs was then constructed beyond the bed. In some camps we used a wall of snow for this purpose. This made an extremely comfortable camp, where food for men and dogs could be cooked at the same time, and where there was plenty of light, besides the cheer that always comes with an open fire.

We lay lengthwise with the fire, and provided ourselves with a pole which had a hook at one end with which to pull down a log or two from the back wall at intervals during the night, to replenish the fire. Thus we did not have to get out of our robes or sleeping-bags; sometimes we were even able to dispense with the robe altogether. The only disadvantage of this system was the tremendous lot of firewood that had to be cut and handled. A stove only required a few armfuls of dry wood, cut short. The open fire used about half a cord of green wood, cut eight feet long.

Those nights certainly had their charm. After a hearty meal one lay on top of one's sleeping-bag, alongside the blazing fire, smoking, with the fire's gleam opening up long lanes through the dark forest. The smoke rose straight up till it cooled, and then spread out, forming a canopy. A perpetual low boom came from the river, mingled with the sharp crack of the freezing spruce and the hiss and crackle of the fire.

The long-drawn howl of a wolf would come across the river or from the back of the forest. If you had native dogs, though they are afraid of the timber wolf, they would answer until the whole forest vibrated with the wild song. These did not seem noises, but rather like a part of the great Northern silence. One would lie for hours, deep in the wonder of it, till the time came to creep into one's sleeping-bag for the night.

One day was much like another, and yet no two were alike. Although the nearest living man might be two weeks' travel away, one was never lonely. The mere matter of being always on the move prevented that. But one was mighty glad to see a man, even if he were only an Indian, and of course the dogs were always company. I think of all lonely spots on earth a deserted camp is the loneliest. It is on trips like these that man begins to understand dog nature.

Later on, when we gave up 'siwashing' and traveled with a tent and stove, the system was something like this: The trail sled, which contained the camp outfit and rations for several days, was unhitched and hauled back into the timber where the camp was to be made, leaving the other two sleds on the river to be picked up next morning. The tents we used were seven by nine wall tents, made of the lightest duck. Two trees were selected and the tent suspended between them by ropes running through the peak of the tent. Guy ropes were tied to the bushes

or whatever was available, as it was impossible to drive stakes into the frozen ground.

The stove was made of two five-gallon commercial oil tins with ends cut off and telescoped together to about twenty inches over all. The ends of the stove were placed on small logs, and the pipe run up through a tin plate in the tent roof.

Kindling for one fire was always carried from the last camp, inside the stove, as it was very important to get the fire lit immediately for fear of freezing the fingers while doing camp work. We never shoveled away the snow, but turned in the bottom of the tent all around. Boughs were laid flat to hold it down. The bed was then prepared and covered the floor space.

Then we unharnessed the dogs, changed our footwear at once, and hung it on the ridge line inside the tent to dry. In camp, we usually wore caribou socks with the hair inside. While supper was cooking, a fire was started outside for the dogs' kettle, which was filled with ice or snow. The dogs were fed last, as it gave them a chance to rest and come to their appetite.

While the bacon was frying we made a flapjack. This was mixed in the sack of flour by making a hollow in the flour, putting in salt and baking powder, pouring water into the hollow, and stirring up a ball of dough, which was then fried in the hot bacon fat. When that came out of the frying-pan, the frozen beans were put in, and as soon as tea was

made supper was ready. Tea was a wonderful drink in the North. It was always boiled, and very strong, and we drank cup after cup until bedtime. Liquor was never used on the trail, as the reaction made it impossible to stand the perpetual cold.

CHAPTER VIII

WITH THE RUSH OVER WHITE PASS

About the middle of the winter of '97–98 I decided to leave the country for a trip and come back in the spring, bringing back a load of stuff to sell. The first thing I did was to sell my outfit, and for this I got a dollar a pound for cases, bags, sleds — in fact everything: but I kept back five dogs and my camp outfit and enough food to take two men out of the country.

The next thing was to get a paying passenger, which was an easy thing to do that winter. The passenger was obliged to walk, do his full share of the work, and pay a dollar a mile in advance — six hundred miles, six hundred dollars. This was the regular tariff. In my case I drew a regular 'lemon'; that is, the man was a raw Cheechako, prided himself on being 'a gentleman,' and to my disgust kept a diary. He couldn't walk, he couldn't chop wood, and he couldn't cook. He could eat, and I suppose that the man who could eat my cooking should have credit for it.

Our ration consisted of bacon, frozen beans fried in bacon fat, flapjacks, and, of course, tea. About the second day out I discovered that he had worked in a lot of luxuries for himself, such as canned milk, some butter, and a bottle of pickles. This was too

much for me, so I put the butter into the dog-food, threw the pickles away, and helped drink the milk.

When two men want to get on amiably on the trail they have to share the work equally. In fact each man usually tries to do a little more than his share. Both men must keep their mouths shut, and never want to stop because they're tired. At night my companion would come in so tired that he couldn't chop wood or cook: the fact is he didn't do any of the camp work except help put up the tent and get the stove started.

I kept my temper until I found that three men had caught up with us with only one dog apiece, each man pulling on his own sled with his dog. This as compared with my team of five good dogs! That night we camped in an old abandoned trading post. A roving band of Indians came in with some moose-meat to trade, and thereupon I discovered that my passenger had a whole medicine kit with him. Then I busted and we had a mix-up.

As luck would have it I happened to come out on top. He was a tall man, but I was fighting for a principle. After things had quieted down, he refused to go any farther with me, and called a meeting of the other three men. His plea in the matter was that I hadn't treated him as a gentleman. Mine was that I hadn't any contract to treat him like one.

The upshot of the affair was that I gave him back a hundred dollars and left him to the tender mercies of the other three men. One of these men had told

my passenger that he would take him out, the passenger interpreting the offer as involving no pay for the trip, but when it came down to brass tacks the man said he would charge him a hundred dollars. In the meantime I had invited one of the other men to go out with me. Therefore the man who was going to take my passenger thought he could buy the other chap's dog cheap. But as he had to pay a hundred dollars for it, he had my Cheechako on his hands and nothing to show for it.

The last day's trip was over Chilkoot Pass. We started from Lake Linderman early in the morning, leaving our entire outfit there, taking only the robes. We didn't need the outfit any more, and in case we couldn't get over the summit it was something to run back to. The tent was left standing, the stove up, the firewood cut, but our provisions were all used up. As we began to climb the snow got heavier, making the going very hard for the dogs. We were on snowshoes, one man ahead and one driving, but the dogs were wallowing badly, the sled blocked, and we made very slow progress.

After we got to Crater Lake the trail grew steeper. In fact it was almost an end. Only a few feet at a time could be made by man and beasts, and it was pitch dark when we got to the summit. Here the dogs were unhitched, and the sled tipped over and given a start down the other side. Then we sat down and slid after it. This was an almost perpendicular drop of twelve hundred feet, and once you start

THE RUSH OVER CHILKOOT PASS

there is no stopping. It was safe, as there was an enormous amount of snow on that side. Our dogs came sliding down after us, sometimes on their backs, sometimes sidewise.

The difficulty began again at the bottom, when we had to find our sled in the pitch darkness. We hunted around for its trail, eventually finding it; the dogs were hitched to it; and both of us rode over the hard-packed snow, in great contrast to the conditions of the other side. We went down the fourteen miles to Dyea at a run. Everybody there turned out to greet us and relieved us of all the money we had, in every way they could think of. Coming from the Yukon with its high prices we were certainly easy.

Going into a store to buy a piece of chewing tobacco, I told the man to give me the smallest cut he could to last me till I left the country, when I always swore off. When I asked him the price he said, 'Two bits.' I handed him two dollars, being unable to realize the fact that prices were so much lower. He laughed and said that one would cover it.

I made arrangements with a man to keep my dogs until I got back. We had a man row us immediately around the point to Skagway, where we heard there was a steamer getting ready to start. It left shortly after we got on board. We were very lucky, as steamers were not running regularly at that time, and I heard afterwards that the other party with the Cheechako had to wait almost two weeks before

getting one. What impressed me more than anything else, after my two winters in the Yukon, was to see such a large body of unfrozen water as that at Dyea.

I had intended to stop only a short time in Seattle, planning to ship my dog Shirley home from there, as the climate was a little too much for him. But at the last minute I decided to take him back East myself. However, I stayed only a few days in the East, stopping on my way back at Lake Winnipeg, where I picked up sixteen half-breed sled-dogs. I left home in February, but was taken sick at Vancouver and didn't get back to Alaska until April.

Vancouver was a busy place that spring. Everybody was going to the Klondike, or helping some one else to get off. Since the Klondike is in British territory we could bond our goods through, and every one had made a rush for Vancouver as the most convenient British port on the border. The prices in Vancouver were soaring because of the rush, and my dogs' board while I was in hospital nearly broke me.

The steamers were now charging increased prices on passage and they sold tickets far beyond their capacity. A man having a first-class cabin ticket found himself obliged to sleep on the dining-room table or under it. There was a man on guard at the entrance to the steamer to count the passengers that went on board. I watched him for a while and found that he was looking at the landscape and not counting.

The boat I went up on was jammed, and had a consignment of North-West Mounted Police on board as well. There were mules and horses, oxen, angora goats, a one-horned bull, and dogs galore. These were all meant as draft animals. The dogs were of every description. One English doctor had brought over twenty nondescript mongrels from Belgium. I suppose he thought we had no dogs in the United States.

All the steamers bound for the Klondike stopped at Fort Wrangel, which was quite a sizable town at this time, being the port of entry for the Stickeen and Teslin Lake route. It was a smaller edition of Skagway, and its chief occupation was fleecing the Cheechakos.

There was a man on board with his sixteen-year-old son. In the few hours that the boat stopped at Fort Wrangel he lost all his money at some bunko game. The son, having more sense than the old man, stayed on board. The father on coming back to the boat was very much cut up about the affair and told his son what had happened.

Without saying a word to his father, the boy went to one of the passengers and borrowed a six-shooter. He went ashore and walked into the gambling-hall where his father had lost all his money. The old man couldn't have done this because, having lost his money, he was a marked man and would probably have been killed by a 'booster' if he ever could have got near the table where he had been fleeced.

But the boy walked up to the table, deliberately drew his gun, and pointed it at the dealer. The man was very much astonished, not connecting the situation with the father's loss. Even here a grown-up couldn't have accomplished what the boy did. He informed the gambler that he wanted his father's money back, and the boosters thinking it a good joke on the dealer, and the dealer himself having a sense of humor, the boy received the full amount. The boy then put up his gun, turned, and went out of the saloon, with evidently no thought of the harm that might come to him. I think his courage had as much to do with his safety as anything.

The most popular port of entry to the Klondike now was Skagway, which was at the head of the new White or Moore's Pass. This town was a fierce rival of the older Dyea which led to Chilkoot Pass. While on the boat we heard of the fatal snow-slide in Chilkoot Pass, and this decided me to take the White Pass route. This is thirty-five miles long as against the twenty-three miles of Chilkoot Pass, but they told me it was much easier, now that the trail had been beaten through. This is about the route the railway now follows.

It would have been impossible to make a pack-trail over Chilkoot Pass without tremendous expense, but it was feasible to make one over White Pass. By the time we reached Skagway they had a trail finished to the summit, and a toll-gate was installed. This was my first impression of the changes

that were coming over the Klondike, and I cannot see a toll-gate to-day without wanting to smash it.

About this time a young woman arrived in Skagway and started a laundry, where she did remarkably well. In one of the epidemics she acted as volunteer nurse and won the respect of everybody. The Colonel of the North-West Mounted Police complimented her by calling her the 'Belle of Skagway,' and she was much pleased with her title, but when an old gum-boot miner in the innocence of his heart called her 'Skagway Belle,' he couldn't understand why he got his ears boxed.

Since it was already so late in the spring the trail on the coast side of the range was nothing but mud, jammed up by the incessant traveling, night and day, of pack-trains and men. It was impossible to drag stuff over this surface with dog-teams. This was rather a poser to me, as I had only five dollars in the world when I landed in Skagway and it would cost over a hundred to get my outfit hauled over the pass. I didn't exactly see how it was going to be done.

There was a man on board with a large outfit and no draft animals, and he was wondering how he could handle it after he got on top of the pass and snow began. So we made an agreement by which he was to hire one of the regular pack-trains to take my stuff up to the summit of the pass, while I was to use my dogs to take his outfit down the other side and onto the lakes.

This was my first experience of driving dogs in traffic, even with an empty sled. All of my driving had been in places where there was anything but a crowd. The trail was literally jammed with a double line of people. Furthermore, the miserable, one-horned bull was getting into everybody's way. As the pack-train had gone ahead with my stuff on it, my dogs and I and our empty sled confronted the toll-gate with no money to pay our way through. As luck would have it, I met the empty pack-train that had taken my stuff up, now coming back, and we bluffed the toll-gate keeper into letting us pass. It was a clear case of bluff. Being on the American side it worked: it wouldn't have prevailed on the Canadian side where they had the North-West Mounted Police behind them.

Almost at the summit the snow started and you stepped from mud onto a hard beaten trail. There was quite a large settlement on the summit. A bad epidemic of spinal meningitis was raging on this trail which took a great many lives. Also Soapy Smith and his gang accounted for a good many men.

There have been a good many stories told of the career and death of Soapy Smith at Skagway, and every tale seems to differ from all others. Where Soapy came from I don't know, but he was the leader of about the most desperate gang of criminals that Alaska has ever known. They preyed on the men going in and out of the Klondike by way of

Skagway and White Pass, and they completely ran the town of Skagway.

Soapy himself was a tall man with a heavy black beard, an intelligent face, keen gray eyes, and a sense of humor. He was a bad man, but he wasn't as bad as his gang, who would stop at nothing. A good many of the gang were not known as such, which made it dangerous for a man to speak his mind in Skagway, as he might be talking to one of the gang without knowing it. These accomplices would always agree with what you said; but you would be sandbagged, or killed in some other way, before morning.

Conditions grew so bad in Skagway that nobody trusted anybody else. This was the reason that Soapy was able to break up a meeting that was held in one of the large dance-halls by the so-called respectable element, to see if the town couldn't be cleaned up. The man who was speaking at the time suddenly stopped and looked over the heads of the other men, whereupon every one turned around to see what had happened, only to find Soapy leaning against the door with his Winchester in the hollow of his arm, smiling at them.

His first words were, 'Gentlemen, I think you had better disperse.' A good many of the men were armed and as brave as Soapy, but none of them dared reach for his gun because he was afraid of being shot by his nearest neighbor who might be one of Soapy's men. And they all filed out past him,

some of them joking with him as they went out. Any one knowing the state of affairs in Skagway at the time would appreciate this.

Later another meeting was held on the end of Moore's Wharf. This wharf was long and built in the form of a T. There were shacks huddled up close on either side of the entrance. The place was chosen so that Soapy could not repeat his performance. Two men were to be chosen by ballot to keep guard over the entrance to the wharf, as this was the only place of real danger, and any disturbance there would give ample warning to the meeting at the end.

One man had already been chosen, when a stranger volunteered to be the second man, with the remark that he cared nothing about their meeting, but he had a little business to settle with Soapy, and that the latter would never get by him alive. Everybody was satisfied except the other guard, who had already been chosen. However, the two men were installed on either side of the entrance to the wharf, with their backs to the buildings, facing each other. In this way they could watch up and down the street and had no fear of an attack from the rear.

The meeting had hardly started when Soapy drew near with a sawed-off shotgun, loaded with chopped lead-pipe. What he had meant to do no one knows, but, as he suddenly approached from the direction that the stranger was guarding, he was shot, without a challenge, through the breast.

The tale was told that Soapy discharged both

barrels of his shotgun into the stranger. The truth is that Soapy was instantly killed and did not even discharge his gun. The stranger and what was left of Soapy were taken into the adjoining shacks. Soapy was on exhibition and some pictures taken of him. Two coffins were buried. But one was filled with rocks, and the stranger was hurried out secretly on one of the boats, so that Soapy's gang could not revenge themselves on him.

The minute it became known that Soapy was dead, his whole gang started up over the pass to get into British territory. A good many men who were not suspected went with them, pretty well proving that they belonged to the gang. The North-West Mounted Police were ready for them. They were turned back, and most of them gave themselves up. Bowers, Soapy's right-hand man, was the first to come back and fairly blackguarded himself out of being lynched. What was done with these men I never heard.

It was discovered that Soapy was married and that his wife was living in the States somewhere. After hearing the news of Soapy's death, she arrived in Skagway with two children, showing letters from Soapy in which he posed to her as a model husband and claimed that the money he kept sending her was made by him at mining. A purse was raised for her and her children by the citizens of Skagway. This story was told me by one of Soapy's gang, two years afterwards, and as far as I know is correct.

I knew Soapy personally and was proud of it, but, as I had no money and knew enough to keep my mouth shut, I was absolutely safe. Soapy, I know, had done a good deal of charity work, giving to one man and another if he really needed it. He was also very hospitable. His gambling-saloon was of course crooked, and the men under him were the worst crooks of all.

I remember one night seeing a man knocked down with the butt of a gun because he tried to explain to a friend how a certain beehive game was worked. Bowers, sauntering up behind him, stopped to listen to the conversation. When the man got through, he slowly drew his gun, and taking hold of the muzzle struck the man over the head with the butt. He then mildly asked one of the boosters to pull the man into the street.

During Soapy's régime a Swede happened to come to town from the interior with two thousand dollars in a gold-sack. Not knowing the state of affairs that prevailed, he went into the saloon, called for a drink, and put his gold-sack on the bar. After weighing out the price and putting it into the till, Bowers, who was tending the bar, remarked what a nice lot of gold he had in the sack. Continuing, he informed him how tough the town was and what a chance he ran of losing it, and advised him to leave it for safe-keeping.

The Swede said he guessed he was able to take care of his own gold without losing it. Whereupon

Bowers said, 'I don't think you are,' and cracked him over the head with his gun. When the Swede came to, he cried out for justice, and was informed by the sympathizers that he had got just what he deserved by showing his money in Skagway. This was seen by a number of people who didn't care to interfere.

A deputy sheriff trying to do his duty was shot by Bowers, who didn't know who the man was. As the sheriff fell on his face, Bowers rolled him over to see whom he had killed, and, recognizing him, made the remark, 'I've killed the sheriff. Ain't that too bad!' Like everything else of this kind, nothing was done about it.

Of course conditions are unusual when enormous crowds of men, coming from all parts of the world, stream through a country in which there is practically no law or organization of any kind. The place was supposed to be under civil law, but that, in the early history of our country, meant no law at all. Any crime could be committed with impunity, and might made right.

The cruelty to animals was something terrible, and strange to say it was not practiced by the so-called rougher element who knew something about handling animals. The worst men were those who in former life were supposed to be of the better class. These men lost their heads completely. I have seen horses that had stuck in the mud abandoned and left to die. They were not even killed, in the rush to hurry on.

Men left valuable stuff on the horses' backs, not even stopping to unpack it. I saw one man who, after having made his way over the pass and onto the lakes, where it was all smooth going, got mad at his dogs, and, after beating them with a club till they were unable to go, began with the leader and pushed them all down a water-hole under the ice. He cut the traces of the last dog, leaving himself absolutely stranded with no means of locomotion. Then he sat down and cried.

It is no use harrowing the reader with further details of these acts of brutality, and it would mean almost endless repetition. The whole trail was strewn with dead animals of all kinds, and there was no interference with this cruelty whatsoever. The unwritten law of the trail seemed to be, 'Mind your own business.' In any case it would have been of little use to interfere, as you would have to do it fifty times a day. Furthermore, when men are in this state of mind it would be necessary to kill them first in order to stop what they were doing. To show you how much we minded our own business, I remember seeing a dead man with the back of his head smashed in and every one passing him and paying no attention. This was probably the work of Soapy and his gang.

The brutality and lawlessness, I am sorry to say, were practically all on the American side of the line. It seemed almost as if, after stepping off the mud into the snow, which was near the boundary, every-

NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE AT DAWSON

thing was absolutely changed. Here a little bunch of North-West Mounted Police held sway. How they managed it goodness only knows, but they did.

The little group of police in this part of the country were the pick of the Mounted, themselves a picked body. They handled the situation, not by brute force, which would have been a physical impossibility, but by common sense, tact, and fearlessness. A single policeman would rise to an emergency and make his own law for the time being, and they were always Johnny on the spot.

Of course they were backed by Canada, and Canada was backed by England, and we all knew it and they knew it. I cannot say too much in favor of this wonderful body of men, and I think it would be absolutely impossible to find their equal. I am a good American, but I take off my hat to the Canadian North-West Mounted Police as I knew them.

The way down from the summit of the pass to the lakes would have been very easy if we had only had elbow room, but the crush was terrible. The traffic was crowded into two narrow lines, one going up and one coming down, with only room for single horses hitched to narrow sleighs. This narrow black line of double traffic extended up over the white mountain as far as the eye could reach. The two lines were so near together at the narrowest places that men drawing a hand-sled would almost brush elbows with the line going past in the opposite direction.

All kinds of animals were used here. Dogs pre-

dominated, but there were horses, mules, donkeys, a team of angora goats hitched dog-fashion, and my old friend the one-horned bull. Sometimes there would be a blockade somewhere ahead and we would have to wait for hours. Then at last the line would move slowly on, to stick again after a few feet.

I saw one funny thing happen here. Of course it took a good many relays to get our outfits down to the lakes. On one of these trips I saw a team of black Newfoundland dogs coming down loaded. Our friend the one-horned bull was going up with two empty sleds hitched to him. They happened to meet in one of the narrowest places on the trail, where the mountain rose sheer on the dogs' side, and dropped down almost perpendicularly on the bull's side. As luck would have it, the only horn the bull had was on the dogs' side.

When about midway of the team, the bull made a lunge at the dogs, caught the traces under his horn, and lurched back, stubbing his toe. Both outfits rolled down the hillside together. The drivers, of course, were walking behind their animals, and, having everything suddenly cleared between them, jumped together and struck a few blows. They then sat down and slid after their teams. Of course the line couldn't stop for a little thing like this and went on, but afterwards I saw both teams on the trail again.

This narrow trail was about eight miles long. Then it widened out like a funnel into a multitude

of trails, and we all had plenty of room. Down near Lake Bennett, at the bottom, we had to cross a swamp for several miles. This was very bad for the dogs as it was so deeply cut up by the horses. The man I happened to be with was a big Scotchman called Cameron. At first sight he was a terrible man. He not only stood six feet six and weighed two hundred and forty pounds, but he had a voice like a bull and he could put on the most ferocious expressions I ever saw on any man.

But Cameron was a good friend, got me through a lot of scrapes, and never got into trouble himself. He knew his stock in trade and worked it for all it was worth, but underneath he had one of the kindest hearts I have ever known. One morning he filled both his side-pockets with cartridges, went back on the trail, and spent most of the day shooting abandoned horses.

We camped near Lake Bennett for several days, relaying supplies. The dog-people combined and cut a new trail across the swamp at some distance from the horse trails, which were nothing but mud and snow, pounded to pieces, and were almost impossible to travel on. Our fifteen or twenty tents went up at the beginning of it, and our one ambition was to keep the horses from starting down our new trail.

When we were all asleep, a horseman tried to sneak down past us, but was discovered by Cameron who happened to go outside the tent at the time. I

shall never forget the roar that woke me up. Rushing out I found Cameron standing over rather a small man, brandishing an axe high in the air, with his most terrifying expression on, and bellowing at the top of his lungs. It was only a question of a few seconds, it seemed to me, before every man in the encampment rushed to the rescue of our trail with every weapon he could get hold of. Rifles, shotguns, bowie-knives, axes appeared from every direction to threaten the one poor man. To say he was scared is putting it mildly. And he certainly was glad to escape back to his own trail. This was the only trouble we had.

After we got onto the lake itself the traveling was perfect. All the snow had melted and the ice was soft enough so that it didn't hurt the dogs' feet. With thirteen dogs in two strings I hauled forty-five hundred pounds of stuff on seven sleds. These sleds had to be pulled close together, and had to be started off with a jerk like a freight train.

A little sawmill had started up here. We bought enough lumber to build two boats rather than stop to whip-saw it out for ourselves. We loaded the lumber onto the sleds, and with a favorable wind down the lakes we decided to rig up impromptu sails. All the way down Lake Bennett and Tagish Lake we had excellent sledding, with sails hoisted. Occasionally a stronger puff of wind would come up, and then a man would jump on his sled, uncouple his dogs, and ride.

Some of the races between single hand-sleds were very amusing, but, as it was impossible to steer, the sleds were all the time running into each other and capsizing. The races didn't always go to the biggest craft. This was all a pleasant let-down after the strenuous work on the pass, and every one was good-natured and cheerful.

It was here that I made a trip of a hundred and ten miles with my dogs without a stop. The latter part of this long trip, as the weather was warm, I slept a good part of the time on my sled. The trip was up the lakes and back again, and, as the dogs had been there before and knew where they had to go, they didn't turn off on the innumerable side trails that led to men's camps along the way. They kept up a steady trot the entire distance. The journey goes to show what the Eskimo dog can do.

At the foot of Tagish Lake we decided to stop and build our boats, as the river was open between Tagish and Mud Lakes. We built two, one for ourselves and one for our dogs, loaded ourselves in, and sailed down the river to Mud Lake which was still frozen over. The river had cut quite a distance into the lake, and we had to go some way through slush-ice till the surface was firm enough to hold us and the boats.

This was bad footing. While we were getting our boats out, we kept falling into the water, and it was common to see a man disappear up to his hips. The ice was very thick, but rotten, and it would push

down under us, but not break off like brittle ice. All we had to do to save ourselves was to put out our hands. But Cameron, with his great weight, absolutely refused to let go of the boat and was the greatest sufferer.

Away from the influence of the inlet the ice was firmer, and would hold a horse-team at night. A team of two mules, hitched tandem in front of a string of sleds, stayed too long on the lake after it began to warm up in the morning, and the whole outfit went down with the exception of the two men. It was never seen again. The heavy sleds pulled the mules to the bottom, and the ice closed in at once over the hole so you could hardly see where they had gone.

As it was warm weather, the two men lost even their coats, which they had tucked under the lash-ropes on the sleds. They were absolutely destitute. But inside of an hour men had helped them out, one with a coat, one with a sled, one with bacon, flour, and so on, until they had a complete outfit and were able to make another start.

We rigged up our sleds like a tricycle. The boats were loaded on top, and with the dogs running, all our goods inside the boats, the mast stepped and sails set, we went down the lake in fine shape. As we could steer the front sled we went in the right direction. The only way we could stop was by letting the sail down. The little dog-boat was trailing behind on its own separate sled.

Just before getting to Fifty-Mile River, which connects Mud Lake with Lake La Barge, we let down the sail, stopped the boat, loaded the dogs into the dog-boat and tied them in, waited till the wind stiffened with good force, and then with a rush sailed out into the open current. We must have been going ten or fifteen miles an hour when we struck the open water and started sailing down the lake. Then came a mad rush to cut loose the sleds and get them out from under the boats and on board.

We had no further excitement until we reached the Canyon and the White Horse Rapids. Here we caught up with a large crowd of people who were taking their stuff around the rapids. The Mounted Police had taken charge here and would not let any one run the rapids with an overloaded boat, or run at all unless he could give some kind of proof that he was used to river work.

Some men were permanently camped here, acting as pilots, and were making very good money, all the way from five to a hundred dollars a trip, according to the boat and what they thought a man could stand. As I knew something about river work and wanted to earn a little money, I acted as pilot for some time. Quite a number of men were drowned that year, but I didn't actually see any.

When we reached the rapids we turned the dogs out of our little dog-boat and cut it loose. It went through the rapids all by itself. One man coming in with a large number of barrels of whiskey threw

them all into the river at the head of the canyon. The men at the foot of the rapids caught them, and I think he didn't lose a single barrel. Here I met Peter Bernard, whom I had left at home in New England on the farm. The last I had heard of him was a report that he had died of exposure somewhere in the Arctic.

The next thing of importance on this trip was crossing Lake La Barge. This was the largest of the lakes and notoriously windy. As all the boats were heavily laden all hands waited till the wind was favorable, when they could sail down in a few hours, accomplishing what would have taken them two or three days to do by rowing. For that matter the scows were not built for rowing.

More than a thousand boats had accumulated the day we started. When we were halfway down the lake the wind dropped and every one waited for it to come up again. The lake was crowded with boats of all descriptions.

A scow which was near our boat contained a man and his wife and another man. This scow was decked fore and aft and the woman was standing on the after-deck, when a sudden gust of wind caused her to lose her balance and fall overboard, there being no rail. The unattached man ran forward to let down the sail, leaving the husband to rescue his wife: but he, losing his head, began to run up and down the deck yelling for help.

A boat lying near by contained two men. While

SHOOTING WHITE HORSE RAPIDS

one of these was fumbling with his sail, the steersman jumped overboard, swam over to the girl, and brought her back to his boat, where they were both dragged on board by his partner. The scow in the meantime had drifted away. This was rather a plucky thing to do, as the lake was full of ice and the man was pretty well exhausted.

The partner then rowed his boat over to the husband's scow, where the woman informed her husband that she had had all of HIM she wanted, and that 'if this man will take me, he can have me!' The man gave her one look (she was a very pretty girl) and said, 'Yes, I'll take you!' Whereat his partner, who was back on the rowing seat, made a kick about a woman coming in between their long friendship.

At this the rescuer, drawing his six-shooter from under the canvas that covered their goods, where the guns were kept in readiness for game, dropped it on his partner, and informed him that the lady was under his protection now and he had nothing to say about it. Then, without taking his eyes or his six-shooter off his partner, he talked to the husband and told him to put the lady's effects into his boat, which was eventually done.

So much for men's friendships when a woman comes between! She eventually got a divorce from her husband, came back into the country, and married her rescuer. She had the admiration and he the envy of all the people who knew the circumstances.

From this point on things went smoothly until we

came to the boulders in Thirty-Mile River. These are not so bad to get around with only one boat to control. But our little dog-boat with its freight, trailing twenty-five or thirty feet astern, suddenly decided to go around one side of a boulder while we went around the other. The jerk pulled off part of the stern of our boat. This could have been remedied, but the dog-boat swamped, and required some desperate work to get it ashore. As all the dogs were chained to it with short chains they were nearly drowned. But everything came out all right in the end.

The rest of the way to Dawson was uneventful, except for the mad race between the boats, that never stopped day or night. Sometimes we would take a course behind an island, and when we passed it we would see another man, whom we had been racing, swept away ahead of us by the current while we had been going down the other side out of sight. This race among the islands would have been amusing if we hadn't been in such dead earnest.

CHAPTER IX

DAWSON IN THE MIDST OF THE BOOM

THE town of Dawson had undergone tremendous changes since I saw it last. The whole river-front now for half a mile was tier upon tier of boats, scows, and rafts, so that a man landing on the edge of this mass of boats would have to cross possibly a dozen or more before getting on shore. A good proportion of the people were still living on their boats. The river was in flood at the time. It was only the big eddy that sets back in front of Dawson that saved all these boats from breaking away and being swept down the river in a body.

The town itself was a swirling mass of humanity. The main street was nothing but a sea of mud, and the pack-horses and mules were always getting stuck in it. The buildings were almost entirely of canvas, consisting of tents for smaller uses and canvas-covered frames for larger purposes. Saloons, dance-halls, and gambling-halls were the chief industry. But the North-West Mounted Police had charge and gave us a good government.

The town was the most unsanitary place imaginable. I know a man who made a bet that he could go down the main street and travel the whole way jumping from one dead horse to another or to a dead dog, and he won his bet. The latter part of the sum-

mer typhoid began to rage and there were often eight or ten deaths a day. There was only one cow in town and she died, leaving the patients with only condensed milk.

A good many medical men had arrived in the country for one reason or another. No doctor could practice in Canada without an examination and license from the Government at Ottawa, so they got around this by all turning nurses. This typhoid raged until the freeze-up. Men came in from the outlying creeks for a few days, and returning carried the disease back and died in their camps, often alone. I found a cabin the following year, almost a hundred miles up the Klondike River, with two men dead in it, and as they had died in their bunks and had plenty of food we presumed their deaths must have been from typhoid.

We had only a few cases of scurvy. As this had always been more or less prevalent before, we laid its abatement to the greater variety of food. It was claimed that a man never got it after he had been there two years, but whether this is universally true or not I cannot say. I never heard of dog-drivers having it, and they certainly lived more roughly than any one else.

The mines didn't really get into full swing until almost a year later. A friend of mine discovered a salt lick about ten miles up a side creek of the Yukon, moved his camp up there, and hunted moose for the market. He always made his headquarters

with us when he came to town, and used to give us the moose nose, which is considered the daintiest part of the moose. This we used to skin and boil whole for several hours, and then soak it in vinegar. It was a great delicacy. This man eventually starved to death. Some men coming down the river stopped at the mouth of his creek and walked up to his camp, where they found him dead in his blankets, and not a bit of food in the camp. Investigation showed that he had had scurvy and then starved to death. Scurvy affects the legs first, and he had dragged himself around the camp till he got too weak to do even that.

The first trip I took up the creeks after getting back, I lugged a large Colt revolver and cartridge belt with me, in case I should see a moose. On my way down I got sick of packing the thing and strapped it onto a large dog I had with me. No one in that country would have thought it a strange sight, but when I got down to Dawson, a boat that had just arrived was tying up at the wharf, and a man yelled out, 'For Heaven's sake, Bill, come and look what sort of a country we've got into! The dogs are carrying six-shooters!' When they spoke of it I noticed the swagger that the dog seemed to put on, and didn't wonder at the exclamation of the Cheechako.

Queen Victoria's birthday was celebrated that spring by every one. As the summer crept on and the Fourth of July approached, an ugly rumor got

started, from I don't know where, that the Mounted Police were not going to allow the Americans to celebrate it. The Americans outnumbered the Canadians about fifteen to one, as every one who wasn't a Canadian said he was American. We swore we would celebrate in spite of everything. Nothing was noticeable as the time drew near except the excessive politeness of the Americans and Canadians toward each other. We all knew that if the Mounted Police said we shouldn't celebrate they meant it, but we determined to celebrate anyway. It was an extremely difficult proposition to handle, and a very nasty undercurrent was running in the camp.

After the rumor had got started, the Mounted Police knew that, if they didn't say anything about it and allowed us to celebrate, it would be said that they were afraid to stop us. If they said that the Americans could celebrate, it would amount to the same thing. A few days before the Fourth a proclamation came out, signed by Colonel Steele, the commanding officer, written almost in the language of a command, saying that the Americans and Canadians would celebrate the Fourth of July together. You might call this tact.

When the Fourth arrived, all that we did in the way of gun-play was to shoot each other's stovepipes off. Later in the day various sports were held and the greatest good will prevailed. The only things that seemed to suffer were the dogs, and the town was full of them; they simply went mad with fright,

running in every direction. My team disappeared completely, with the exception of one dog which I found under my bunk twenty-four hours afterwards. Some of the dogs never turned up at all.

The town was now building at a tremendous rate, and all of logs. Everybody was trying to get his cabin or other building finished before the cold weather set in. Rafts of logs were coming down the river all the time, and two sawmills were working overtime. Large pack-trains were constantly going out to the mines with provisions, and a crude suspension bridge was thrown over the Klondike River. Restaurants, stores, theaters, dance-halls, and of course gambling-halls and saloons, were going full blast.

The saloons were almost like club-rooms, patronized alike by temperance men and drinkers. The custom now began among the saloon-keepers of shutting down for a few hours or days while they made minor changes or repairs. Then they would hold what was called a 'Grand Opening,' and everybody seemed to patronize them the more to help them recover from the time when they were closed. But with all this activity there didn't seem to be the insane feverishness that you meet in a large city.

An incident happened the next winter which I think I shall mention here in connection with the Dawson saloons. One very popular saloon-keeper had a 'Grand Opening' which was, you might say, too successful, because he was so well patronized

that they drank up all his available whiskey. Being a man who could rise to an emergency, and seeing that he was losing trade, he made a speech to the gathering, something like this:

'Gentlemen: I opened to-night with the expectation that I could give a good welcome and plenty of refreshments to my friends. But fate is against me. I have twelve dog-teams coming down the river, which are expected to-day, loaded to the gunwale with the finest whiskey that man ever drank.

'You remember when I was out last summer I visited my old home in Kentucky. As a boy a legend floated around there of a hidden cave, 'way back in the times of the Civil War, which was raided by the Government officials, and a hundred and forty barrels of whiskey were found in it. The distillers themselves were killed in the fight, and the heads of the hundred and forty barrels were stove in, and this priceless fluid was spilled on the floor of the cave. The cave's mouth was then roughly rocked up, and soon overgrown with the verdure of that country, and in those harrowing times when men's hearts bled and women's tears ran, all trace and memory of the cave was lost.

'By chance a boy, a rabbit hunter, chasing his fleeting game through this howling wilderness, saw his prey disappear into these deep rocks, and being a boy and knowing that he would get a licking from his father if he didn't get the rabbit, he pried out some of the rocks and discovered the cave of the

legend. This was done just when I got back to Kentucky. And, gentlemen, those hundred and forty barrels of whiskey spilled on the barren rocks of the cave had drained into a hollow, and there by evaporating for some forty years had reduced down in the sterilized air of the cave to only ten barrels, and I, gentlemen, bought every drop of it, and am now having it shipped to the brave men of the Yukon.

'Now, gentlemen, my dog-teams are somewhere on the ice, if they are not under it, but rather than disappoint you I will give you a little of my private stock, which I scooped out with my own hands from the deepest depression of the pocket. This, gentlemen, I will give you to-night at the same reduced price you have always paid.'

With that he turned to one of his bar-tenders, who was wearing a broad grin, and said, 'Johnny, bring in my private stock.' The bar-tender, rising to the occasion, dipped two buckets of Yukon water out of a barrel, produced several demijohns of alcohol and different ingredients, and made his whiskey before our eyes. It must have been pure because we all saw it done, and what's more, everybody went up and had a drink to see what the stuff did taste like. But I don't think any saloon-keeper in the place but Pete Macdonald could have got away with it.

At this time I saw an example of the unique way of advertising that some men practiced up there, and how earnestly it was taken by the men who came

in contact with it. One of the large restaurants came out with the old story that had been told a great many times in the North, with many variations, that a mastodon had been found in an underground glacier, in a perfect state of preservation, and how the bones and hide were being shipped out to the Smithsonian Institution. This particular restaurant was said to have bought all the flesh, and was serving it a dollar and a half a plate. What they were really serving was simply first-class beefsteak. They also backed up this article in the newspaper by a large notice on their bills of fare: 'Fresh Mastodon Steak To-day.'

An old-timer coming down from the creeks, where he had been for over a year, asked where was the best place to get a good feed, and a friend showed him the article in the paper and advised him to try it. The old-timer went to the restaurant and called for mastodon steak, which by this time had become a regular order of the patrons. After getting the steak and trying a mouthful, he remarked to the waiter that it tasted like beef. The waiter, having got sick of this mastodon business and not seeing the joke of it anyway, said, 'You damned fool, what do you expect?' Whereupon the old-timer rose in his wrath and said he had ordered mastodon steak, which they had advertised, and mastodon steak he would have or nothing, and stamped out, mad all through.

Almost from the very beginning of the rush there

had been a constant buying and selling of claims. A great many of these were bought and sold without anything being known about their contents beyond their proximity to good or bad claims. As the saying goes, 'Gold is where you find it.'

It is a fact, of course, that the pay streak in a claim that had only a few prospect holes in it and appeared to be a big find might suddenly stop, or, on the other hand, a poor one might turn into a rich one. Later on people grew wiser, and claims were thoroughly prospected and holes were made in many places so that a good guess could be made as to their richness. A half-interest in one claim I know of was sold for a hundred dollars, and afterwards turned out to be worth half a million. Another claim was sold to a man for two thousand dollars, as this was all the money he had, and this turned out to be one of the very richest of the Klondike. This man panned out ten thousand dollars' worth of gold in his mud-box during the winter, and gave it to the man who had sold him the claim, with the remark: 'When you have spent all this you can come back and get a job on your old claim.' Of course 'salting' was practiced, too, with more or less success.

There was a man here whom I presume that everybody at the time had heard of, called 'Swift Water Bill.' This man, when I first met him, was in the Birch Creek district, digging out the only habitation he owned on earth, a tent, which had fallen down and been overrun by a glacier. As far as I know he

didn't have a cent in the world. But as luck would have it he staked a very rich claim in the Klondike.

Immediately he began to improve himself in dress. By picking up a piece here and a piece there he was soon garbed like a civilized man, and could have passed very well in a city; though having only one shirt he had to go to bed while it was being washed. I think he had the distinction of wearing the first white collar in the Yukon.

He soon became engaged to a girl in town but they had some tiff, and to take it out on him she went to a restaurant on the arm of a gambler. Swift Water Bill was sitting in the restaurant near the door, and heard her say she would like some eggs. Now these eggs were the first that had come into the Yukon Valley. The entire lot had been bought by the restaurant-keeper and were being served at a dollar-fifty apiece. Swift Water Bill, being no fool, sent for the proprietor before the gambler had a chance to get in his order, and bought every egg in the house. As they brought him relays of fried eggs, he flipped them out of the window to the waiting dogs outside, with remarks to the crowd in general on the smartness of the dogs in catching them. This little episode cost him six hundred dollars, but the girl came back to him.

This time, though, she married him, helped him to spend all his money, and got a divorce from him. Again with his luck he struck another good claim, and married a sister of the first girl. This was re-

peated with a third sister. His first two wives were on the stage, acting in a play called 'Still Water Willie.' Swift Water Bill used to go and see himself caricatured, and applaud louder than any one.

During the winter, when the gold was being got out from his claim under the charge of a foreman, Swift Water Bill stayed in Dawson. As the gold-bearing diggings were thrown on a dump, frozen, and were not available till the next spring, Swift Water borrowed money to gamble with at ten per cent a month, which was the usual rate of interest of the country.

He became a famous gambler, and was very fond of hiring a faro table for the evening, when his customary remark before beginning was, 'Gentlemen, the limit is from the floor to the ceiling,' which meant that there was no limit. Any one can beat a faro bank if only he has money enough, provided there is no limit, by doubling his bets. Various little flurries took place that were well worth watching. It was interesting to see a man, dirty and unkempt, with earth-stained clothes, lose ten to twenty thousand dollars at one sitting.

Gambling has always been thought of in a mining camp as connected with shooting and fighting of all kinds, but here I don't remember one gambling-fight that amounted to anything. The gambling-halls were orderly, well conducted, and on the square. This I think was entirely due to the North-West Mounted Police, who were always in evidence.

They allowed things to go without interference to a certain limit. After that they stepped in.

The dance-halls also were orderly, and generally had two policemen lounging around, apparently not taking the least notice of anything. But toward morning, when the better element had gone and things began to get rougher, the policemen were always Johnny on the spot. I saw a case where a man, running to catch a girl, pushed a policeman out of his way, not knowing who he was, and threw him in a heap in a corner. The policeman was on his feet in a second and after the man, but was grabbed by his fellow constable and they both laughed, knowing that no insult was meant.

Sometimes in the midst of the noise and uproar a man's voice would ring out in a different tone, and all the dancers would fall away from two men somewhere in the hall. But instantly there would be a policeman at their side and the thing would be settled without any trouble. The individual dances lasted for three minutes each and cost a dollar, paid to the man at the bar. With this a drink was included. The girls got twenty-five per cent of the money for each dance, and some of them made as much as twenty-five dollars a night.

These girls as a general thing were professional dancers. Some of them were married women who were escorted to the dance-halls by their husbands, danced all night, and were then escorted home by them. The girls were always dressed in the height of

fashion and danced in slippers, not moccasins. I never saw any real rowdyism at these dances. Occasionally a couple would get up and give a fancy dance, usually an impromptu affair, and some of them were certainly wonderful. The men were dressed in everything from the attire of civilization down to the Siwash garb, but no one ever knew from the looks of a man's clothes how much money he had.

The theaters were good, bad, and indifferent. We had a troupe that was wintering there, and they gave a series of old plays that were really very well done. Of course 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' had to be given. I have seen this several times in my life, but I never saw the parts of Eliza and Simon Legree so well done. I can't say as much for the pack of bloodhounds. These were represented by a Malamute puppy, drawn across the stage in a sitting posture by an invisible wire and yelling his full displeasure to the gods. The ice was represented by newspapers. Eliza acted her part exceptionally well on the newspapers, having seen people actually cross floating ice.

Among some of the interesting people whom I met at this time was a girl who had come in over the ice that winter, with two dogs. She was the only true 'cowgirl' I have ever met, although I have seen a good many imitations. She was born and bred in the West and had run her own ranch in Alberta, taken care of her mother, and taught school. She was independent, fearless, and intelligent, and on

top of it all was extremely good-looking and could have made her way in any walk of life. This girl had come into the country alone, stopping at the Mounted Police posts on the way down. She hired the cabin next to ours in Dawson and immediately started to acquire some mining property. She was, I think, the most remarkable horsewoman I have ever known.

One day she wanted me to go with her and show her some mining property she wanted to buy, and she asked me to get her a good horse. I selected the best horse I could find in town. On the way to her cabin the horse and I had a difference of opinion, in which the horse won out. Thinking myself something of a rider, I had misgivings about offering her this horse, but I changed my mind when I saw her get onto it.

I was walking, and in the rough places I got ahead of the horse. We kept passing and repassing each other for the first ten miles up the Klondike River. At this point there was a horse-ferry. One of the down-river scows had been brought up and attached to a tight wire cable stretched across the river at some little distance above the water. There were two pulleys on the cable, from one of which a rope ran to the bow of the scow, while from the other a rope ran to the stern. By tightening or slackening these ropes the proper cant was given to the ferry, so that it was carried across the river by the force of the current.

A NEWSPAPER COMES TO TOWN, DAWSON, 1898

These scows were decked fore and aft for about eight feet. The horses were taken onto the forward deck by a narrow gangplank and thus into the cockpit. The river being swift and deep near the bank it was a ticklish business getting them aboard.

When we arrived at the ferry two Englishmen were trying to get their horses into the scow. They had taken the packs off and with a great deal of handling and talking to the horses they managed to get them over the plank and down into the cockpit. Miss Howe sat on her horse, waiting for them to get out of her way, with a rather amused expression. When everything was clear she literally seemed to lift her horse by the spurs to the middle of the gangplank, which buckled badly with the impact, but the next jump was made onto the deck of the scow, where she rode him down into the cockpit, and swung off, throwing the reins over the horse's head for me to hold. I don't think any of us got our eyes and mouths closed till we reached the other bank. There the process was reversed.

Before this ferry had been installed, a bateau used to be run here in the same way. One day several men came down with their packs on their backs to be taken across. They all took their packs off with the exception of one man, whose pack was fastened so tight that he couldn't remove it. As ill luck would have it, the ferryboat tipped over. Everybody was saved except the one man whose pack was so heavy that it sank him.

About this time we had an epidemic of something around town that resembled grippe. Among others Miss Howe came down with it. The doctor who came to see her told us she ought to have some means of communication with us if she was taken sick in the night. One of us rigged up a small rope that ran from her bed through the wall of her cabin, across the alley to ours, then through our wall and across our floor to the wall beyond, where it was hitched to a dog-harness with bells on it. The idea was that if she needed anything and pulled the rope in the night, the dog-harness would drop down and the bells would wake us up.

There was no signal until some time in the middle of the night, when with a bang and a rattle of bells the harness dropped to the floor, scooted across it and up the other wall. We all woke up with a jump, thinking that the girl must be terribly ill. Getting on what clothes we could, we rushed around to her door, banging on it until a voice sang out from the interior, 'I don't know who you men are, but if you aren't gone in one second I'm going to shoot!'

Explanations followed and upon examination we found that a man had gone through the alley, caught on the rope and pulled it along with him accidentally, giving the alarm, but not disturbing the girl. I heard later on that she married one of the North-West Mounted Police.

This summer a little incident happened which showed what nerve some men have, and illustrated

their fortitude in standing pain. Three of us had dropped down the river in a poling boat, and had the misfortune to get caught in a log jam, where most of the current swept under the logs. In trying to save our boat from being drawn under, one of the men had the ill luck to break his leg between the knee and ankle. The question then arose what to do about it, as it would take two or three days to get him up to Dawson.

At his suggestion we decided to set it ourselves. It was the big shin-bone that was broken, and the ends had slipped and gone by each other. None of us knew anything about surgery, but we had some common sense. So after a good deal of discussion, in which he joined almost as impartially as we did, he was lashed in a sitting posture with his back against a tree, blankets being used so that the ropes wouldn't cut him. Then some sacks were wrapped around his ankle and a rope wound around these, coming from either side so as to get a direct pull and not to cant the ankle.

The ends of the rope were hitched to a long lever which was put around a tree. Two of us on this lever managed, by hauling steadily and evenly, to pull the lower end of his leg down so that the other man could work the ends of the bones back together and hold them in position, binding splints in place. With the exception of spitting a good deal of tobacco juice, the man didn't show the least indication of pain. Several times afterwards we made him

exhibit his leg in a dance-hall to show what a good job we had done.

I saw an amusing incident this summer. My cabin was just below one of the trails. Back of it and above the trail was another dog-driver's cabin. Farther down this trail were camped two men who had just come into the country and were living in a tent. One evening a pair of horses came walking by that had been hauling logs back of the town. They came down loose and singly, with their chain traces hooked back onto their breeching. As they walked along, the other driver's dogs jumped them, starting them into a trot. Hereupon the trace of one of the horses came loose and caught in the ridgepole of the tent. The tent was caught up like a tablecloth, and both horses stampeded down the trail with the tent following them.

The two strangers had been eating their dinner inside the tent, with the grub-box as table. When the tent was whisked away they were suddenly brought into publicity. As they chased their tent full-speed down the trail, after the runaway horse, the dogs quit the pursuit of the horse and piled into the unfinished dinner. The men soon came back with the rescued tent, but found a new disaster, as the marauding dogs had not only cleaned up their dinner but robbed their grub-box as well.

After the atmosphere had cleared up a little and the men could appreciate a bit of humor, I invited them down to my cabin, to give them what hospi-

tality I could. One of them then informed me that it was an unlucky tent anyway, as it had already been through the great snow-slide on Chilkoot Pass, and they thought they had better get rid of it or it might involve them in another catastrophe.

There was a famous old-timer here at this time. He had made a trail that cattle and horses could be taken over, spending a good deal of time and money on it, and this trail was named the Dalton Trail after him. He was one of the men who had helped to make Alaska. About this time, or perhaps a little later, I heard a story of a party of men arriving with some beef cattle, intending to drive them over the Dalton Trail. They were advised by some of the people on the coast to get Dalton's permission: this he was always glad to give, along with help in the way of sketch-maps. The asking for permission was only a matter of courtesy. Their reply was that this was a free country and they guessed they would travel that trail whether he was willing or not.

Dalton heard of this. The morning they pulled out with their cattle he appeared, mounted, with his six-shooter and rifle, and calmly informed them that he was going along with them the entire journey. Furthermore, he announced they would be allowed to use the trail where it went through canyons or across fords, where there was no other place to pass; but anywhere else, if man or beast stepped onto that trail he would kill him. I believe the trail is

over two hundred and ninety miles long. Dalton rode the entire distance with them, traveling on his own trail and seeing that they kept off. Where it joined the Yukon he turned around and rode back to the coast.

All this summer boats kept coming. Prices of food dropped steadily until you could buy supplies almost at Seattle prices. The market was filled, too, because many discouraged men were selling their outfits and leaving for the outside. The mines that could be worked in summer were in full blast. Prospectors were swarming all over the hills and creeks. I spent part of the summer on Last Chance Creek, where Kronstadt and I had a claim. A few cabins had been built on this creek and men were busy prospecting and getting ready for winter.

In the course of the summer a man killed his partner on Last Chance Creek, shut himself in his cabin, and swore that he would kill any man who came near. Work was stopped on the creek and a man was sent the eighteen miles to Dawson to inform the Mounted Police, since they would not permit us to take the law into our own hands. Eventually a lone policeman showed up.

Upon his arrival we asked him when they were coming up to arrest the man, as we were tired of keeping watch over the cabin. The policeman's reply was that the colonel had sent him up to get the man. We then told him that the man had shut himself in his cabin, swearing that he would shoot the

first man who came near him, and that it was certain death to go within range.

These cabins were built of logs, with a foot or more of dirt on the roof, and were almost impregnable. These were the days of black powder when the old forty-fives didn't have the penetrating power of the newer guns. So this man's cabin was really a first-class fort. All that he needed to do to make a loop-hole was to poke some moss out between the logs.

After sitting there some little time and smoking a cigarette, the policeman said he guessed he'd have to make a try at it. Getting up, stiff from his long walk up to the mines through the mud, he went over toward the cabin. When about fifty feet from the door he put on a military bearing, walked up, and knocked on the door, calling, 'Open in the Queen's name.' We all expected to see him shot down, knowing what sort of man was inside.

Every gun of the watchers was turned on the door. Police or no police, law or no law, I think every man intended to shoot the occupant if the policeman were killed. Much to our surprise the door was thrown open and the man appeared unarmed, his shoulders square, his head a little on one side, not in the least dejected-looking, and held out his wrists to be handcuffed. The policeman had not drawn his gun. Feeling around for the bracelets, apparently not watching the man, the officer handcuffed him.

The whole thing was done with about as much

spectacular display as if the policeman had been looking for a piece of string to tie a dog with. Not a word was said, as far as I know, until we began to crowd around the pair. Then the prisoner, speaking to the policeman and ignoring us, said to him in a voice loud enough to be heard by all, 'Sir, I watched you from the time you started to come up to my cabin, and had you covered, simply waiting till you got near enough so I couldn't miss you, I had every intention of killing you, knowing my own life was forfeited. But I found it impossible to shoot down in cold blood a man who was braver than I. However, I should have liked to get in a few shots at these blankety-blank cowards who had me surrounded, only they were hardly worth it.' He said a good deal more to our discredit than this.

The policeman got red in the face and looked uncomfortable. Then, taking his man, he started back on the long walk to Dawson. This was the method of the North-West Mounted Police: one man for a man. But they had the majesty of the English law back of them. We went back to work after they had gone, and I guess we all felt rather small.

This was the open season for tall stories of every description from the outlying country. Some men claimed to have found the 'mother lode' of gold. One man was said to have shot a musk ox, never seen in this country, but when the story was run down it turned out that he had eaten a muskrat.

Another found a new-fangled kind of tent, of a dark blue color, floating down the Klondike, and word went round that it was André's balloon that had drifted across the North Pole and had never been heard from.

One old-timer, Hank Summers, one of the best liars that ever lived, had left for the outside. As usual with us he went busted, and wondered how he could get back to the Yukon. Chancing to meet on the train a professor of archæology, who was very much interested in the discovery of mastodon remains in Alaska, Hank told the time-worn story of finding a mastodon buried in an underground glacier.

The professor was very much interested and a bargain was struck by which he would pay Hank's passage back into the country if Hank would send him the skin and bones of the mastodon after he got there. Hank wondered all the way in how he was going to pay his debt. But he soon forgot his troubles. When he arrived in the country and found that a claim that he owned had turned out well and had made him a rich man for life, he forgot his worries about mastodons. He worked all summer, sold his claim in the fall, and left on the last boat out, with no mastodon.

But all the way down the river, whenever the boat stopped, whether at a white village or an Eskimo, he bought mastodon bones, tusks, and teeth, until he had a sizable hoard collected in the fore part of the

steamer. This he shipped to the said professor, and we hope he was satisfied. The country at that time was full of mastodon bones, which the Indians collected and sold to the white men. The miners discovered a good many in the mines as well.

A huge mastodon molar, weighing eighteen and a quarter pounds and in a perfect state of preservation, was 'hocked' to a man named Harris by a chap who soon afterwards disappeared. This molar was a beautiful dark mahogany color, and I was very anxious to get it for a paper-weight for a dentist friend of mine. Harris wouldn't sell it. But since he was an old man and a great drunkard as well, I hoped that he would soon die and I should be able to get the tooth. Unfortunately when this happened I was three hundred miles away, and some other chap got it instead.

CHAPTER X

PACK-TRAINS, DOGS, AND STAMPEDES

THE summer of '98 and the following one were great years for the men who were running pack-trains of horses. There were several hundred horses and mules making trips to the mines. These had been brought over White Pass and shipped down the river to Dawson in scows, where they brought about five hundred dollars apiece. Each animal was loaded on the average with two hundred pounds of freight at forty-five cents a pound, made the round trip to the mines every two days, and got his living off the country. Each horse was able to make fifty or more round trips in the course of the summer and could earn about forty-five hundred dollars during the season. A train consisted of five to thirty animals and was handled by two men; so the profits were enormous. But the mortality among the horses was very heavy, and usually they were all shot before the winter began, as there was no food for them. Most of the men running pack-trains were old hands at it in other parts of the country and were very skillful.

Almost any article could be packed on the back of a mule or a horse. The only limit was excessive weight. In one or two cases even this was overcome. I have in mind the casting for a large pump which

came up on the river steamer. As this was a solid piece which weighed seven hundred and fifty pounds and the trails at this time were too bad and crooked for hauling, or for drawing the machinery on poles between two animals, it had to go on the back of a single pack-horse. The whole mine was waiting for this casting; it constituted a problem for the mine-owners as well as the packers, and almost any amount would be paid to have it delivered.

The contract for packing it over was at last bid off by the Bartlett Brothers at what bonus I don't know. It was generally thought that one horse could not pack this, as it was counted an excessive weight for any distance. But the ingenuity of the packers overcame this. They made a platform the size of the casting and strapped it on top of a pack-saddle. Then the casting was swung up on sheer-legs and lowered onto the platform on the horse's back, and bolted there.

It took five men to complete the job from that point on. One man led the horse and four others with short props accompanied him, one at each corner of the platform. These men not only steadied the horse over bad places, but for short intervals they put their shoulders under the four corners and propped it up, relieving the horse of the weight. They made the sixteen-mile trip so well, and the horse was in such good condition at the end, that he was led back again that night. This feat stands unique in that section. As the trails improved, loads

were sometimes taken up on poles swung between two horses tandem, but this summer trails were too rough and crooked for that method.

There was a bad place on Bonanza Creek that the pack-trains had to pass. I happened once to be standing on the bank there with three or four other men and saw a man save the life of one of his pack-horses in the space of a few seconds. Some way up Bonanza Creek sluicing was going on, and the tricky place was below this at a widening of the creek, where the silt had overflowed the whole creek-bed, making a flat of quicksands a quarter of a mile wide. This country had been dotted with countless prospect-holes twelve to fourteen feet deep and four to six feet across, and silt of the consistency of quicksand had covered everything up so that it was impossible to see whether the silt was a quarter of an inch deep or the depth of the deepest hole.

The large pack-trains generally kept to the banks in spite of the mud, while the smaller trains of one or two horses, and the pedestrians, took a chance and went through, feeling for the holes with staffs like blind men. The man in question started through leading two horses, one tied to the tail of the other. He was feeling in front with his staff and evidently just missed one of the prospect-holes, for the rear horse, cutting a little closer, plunged head foremost down into it and left nothing but his hindquarters showing.

We all started to his rescue at once through the

slippery silt, but before we got there the man had swung the other horse round, tied their tails together by knotting them, holding the ends so that the knot wouldn't slip, and pulled the first horse out. When we arrived, he was already cleaning the mud out of the horse's nostrils. After it was all over both horses still possessed their tails. I have often observed a horse's capacity to pull by his tail, but I never saw it better illustrated than by this incident.

One day in the fall three of us decided to go duck-shooting. We dropped down the river thirty miles, where we had fairly good luck. There was one man in the party who had never done any shooting and was new to the country in every way. Having a very good temper he was more or less of an easy mark for the other men. If anything happened it always happened to this man. In our hunt he wasted a great deal of ammunition, but never killed anything.

One day I told him, out of the kindness of my heart, that it might be the gun that was at fault, and suggested that we try it on a mark, sending him off about fifty feet to put up a flour sack to shoot at. As soon as his back was turned, I took the wads out of one cartridge and poured the shot on the ground. Handing him the gun I told him it was already loaded. After a careful aim he blazed away at the flour sack and put the remaining wad and one shot which had stuck in it right plumb in the middle, but

never made a scratch anywhere else on the sack. He couldn't understand it.

Then I offered to shoot at the same mark, and at that distance I blew the sack all to pieces. I tried the trick again, with the result that this time when he shot not even a wad hit the mark, whereupon he threw the gun as far away from him as he could, in the only fit of temper I ever saw him exhibit, vowing he would never shoot again. Another time he wounded a rabbit and instead of shooting again he dropped his gun and pursued his rabbit on foot, which cost us several hours' hunt for his gun until it was found.

One night, when we were comfortably settled in the tent, a Cheechako who was with us decided he wanted to learn German from one of the other men. After hearing them 'hoch' at each other till I was sick and tired of it, I thought I would help matters out, so I emptied the pepper-pot on top of the stove and wandered out. The next thing was a sort of human explosion inside the tent, and the German in his haste to get out struck the tent pole and dragged the tent down on top of the poor Cheechako. I thought it well to remain hidden in the darkness until things had cooled down.

The next day after this incident we were swept onto the point of a submerged sandbar in the middle of the river, and we all had to get out of the boat to lighten it and get it off. In the mad rush to get into the boat as soon as it was free, the Cheechako, of

course, got left on the sandbar and we were swept down the river. These sandbars have a nasty feeling when you are on them. They feel as if they were being washed out from under your feet all the time, whether you keep still or whether you move. There is really no danger, but the first experience is unpleasant, especially if you can't swim. It took us fully an hour before we could strike the other shore and pole our boat far enough upstream to drop down and pick the Cheechako up. You can imagine the poor fellow's feelings, as he couldn't swim and it was fully half a mile across the swift current to either shore.

About the time we decided to come home from our duck-hunting, we woke up one morning to find the river running with ice. This made it impossible for us to go in the boat, so we decided to cache it and our outfit at a camp of Indians just below us. The old chief, called Thomas, was a particular friend of mine, and I knew he would take good care of the boat. So we left it with him, shouldered what packs we had, and struck across the country for Dawson.

After getting onto the higher hills we discovered that the river had cleared of ice, so decided to get our boat and tow her. Coming down off the hills we struck the river about a mile and a half above the Indian camp. Two of us walked down to get our boat, leaving the Cheechako with our packs. We found old Thomas and told him we had come back

after the boat, which he promptly refused to let us have, with the explanation, 'Three men he leave him, three men he come get him.' The old man thought we had killed the other man for the sake of his outfit and the boat. Nothing would move him, so we had to go up and get the Cheechako before we could get the boat. The last time I saw old Thomas he was just about ready to cash in, and all his conversation was, 'Me sick, me very sick.' He was my best friend among the Indians.

As winter came on most of the pack-trains were eliminated for lack of food, and dogs took their place. Chris Sonnikson, our old friend of the way-house, who had spent the summer putting up hay on the upper waters of the Klondike, now brought it down on a raft of firewood. He had had the forethought to buy rolled oats and cornmeal for feed when the prices were low in the summer. As winter approached he had five horses given him which he worked all winter, putting two dog-sleds to each horse and driving the bunch ahead of him. He cleaned up thirty-five thousand dollars that winter, in spite of the fact that freight had dropped to ten cents a pound, as he had two hundred days to freight in.

I spent almost the entire winter freighting with my dogs to the outlying creeks, and so was away from civilization most of the time. There was more money in it than in ordinary freighting to the mines, and the life suited me better. I had to camp out,

but this was less difficult now than formerly, as by this time we all used tents and stoves.

While I was in town one time news was brought in of a man who had been frozen to death on the headwaters of Moosehide Creek, and I went up to bring him back. The trip was not a long one, but it was very rough and I took a man along to help me. We found our man just where he had dropped, rolled him in a sled-sheet, and lashed him onto the sled.

When we got back to the Yukon my companion, who was an oldish man, gave out. I had to put him on the sled on top of the corpse. It was late in the night and the moon was high when we drew near Dawson. About this time we met several dog-teams on a joy-ride, with girls as passengers. Before the teams passed me I stopped long enough to let the old man get off the load, and as the teams slowed up to pass me the laughter was checked, because the joy-riders couldn't help noticing what we had wrapped up on the sled. Tired as the old man was, I couldn't persuade him to climb back onto the load.

The most exciting ride after dogs I ever had took place that winter. The wife of one of the miners wanted me to take her out to her husband's claim, over the divide into the headwaters of the Indian River, a trip of some thirty-five miles. It was the first time I had been over the trail that season. Starting late we reached the top of the divide after dark.

The previous winter the trail had left the summit on a slope, but it had been abandoned on account of a new glacier that had formed in the path of the old trail, and it now followed the top of the divide for a mile or more before dropping down on the other side. I didn't know of this. My dogs whirled when they reached the old trail and started down the glacier. I had my light sled with handle-bars. My passenger was wrapped in a robe, with the lash-rope thrown over her and tied, as the custom was.

In the darkness I didn't realize what I was up against until the sled bounded forward on its downward journey over the ice. The dogs, knowing that they mustn't let the sled catch up with them, flew in a mad race to keep ahead of it. The glacier dropped off, as they usually do, in a series of steps, from one to four or five feet high. I was just able with the aid of the brake to hold the sled back and keep it from overturning, and to prevent myself from being snapped off the handle-bars. This grade was two miles long.

How we got down to the bottom right side up, with myself still connected to the sled, is still a mystery to me, as it seemed to me that half the time either the sled or I was in midair, where, of course, the brake was useless. The worst of it was that in the complete darkness I didn't know what was going to happen next. The old adage, 'Hang onto the handle-bars no matter what happens,' brought us through safely and right side up.

We struck the level with a bound and dashed through a pool formed by the glacier. This had frozen over, but I broke through this ice and went to my armpits in cold water. However, as I was sitting down when I struck it there was no danger. We had only a couple of miles to go after that before we got to the cabin, but my clothes were frozen so stiff I could hardly move. The girl passenger came through dry, as the sled had more bearing surface than I had, and didn't go through the ice.

At the cabin, while I was changing into some of her husband's clothes and she was cooking supper, she calmly informed me that the roof had caught fire around the stovepipe. So half in and half out of my clothes, I had to climb upon the roof and put the fire out. It was horribly cold and she kept making remarks to me not to chuck so much snow, because it melted and came down the stovepipe. She asked me if I couldn't wait till the beans were warmed. This may have been funny to her, but in my condition it wasn't funny to me. She was a cool woman, but I think of the two I was the cooler. Going back next day, I met her husband coming out, and told him the whole thing, which he seemed to enjoy immensely.

Stampeding after wild-cat claims reached its height in the winter of '99. After prospecting around the outlying country men would come in with wild tales of the fabulous discoveries they had made, and some of them really believed their own tales. A man

would tell some friend of the find and offer to guide him back to it, but first would swear him to secrecy. The friend always had a friend, and so on down the line, and the farther the story went the bigger it grew, so that, when the original man started out with his friend in tow, he was rather surprised when he saw several hundred men, each one following the other, in his wake. Not one of these had the faintest idea where he was going. Each man followed the man in front.

Sometimes the stampedes were composed of dog-teams of different sizes, and sometimes of men hauling hand-sleds. Some would start at midday, some in the middle of the night. The only redeeming feature about them was that they took the men only short distances away, usually only a day or so's journey out. I never knew of one that amounted to anything.

But the man who led one felt in duty bound to take the procession *somewhere*, when he had traveled a day or more, because men who had dragged their hand-sleds for twenty-five miles were in no mood to be trifled with. Often enough the leader was spurred on by threats of lynching and every kind of horror. Some of these stampedes ended rather tragically for the followers. One man froze his foot, and his leg was amputated to the hip, piecemeal, as blood-poisoning set in. This was one of our mounted policemen.

There was one stampede here that has gone down

in history as the 'Nigger Jim Stampede.' Nigger Jim was a large, fair-haired white man who came from Kentucky and got his soubriquet because he talked like a Southern negro. He was an old-timer in the country and owned good mining property. One day a man bet him that it would be impossible for any one of his standing to tell one of his friends of a rich prospect he had found and get quietly out of town.

The stampede started in the middle of the night, when Nigger Jim and his friend sneaked out of town as quietly as possible with a first-class dog-team loaded with provisions for a more or less lengthy stay. He was immediately followed by other dog-teams of varying sizes, which dwindled down to men hauling their own hand-sleds. When daylight came, Nigger Jim thought he had drawn the whole town.

After trying to shake them by a long trip, which incidentally was hard work because he had to break trail, he went into more or less permanent camp and tried to starve them out. The men's provisions then ran low and every one's hand was against him. They consolidated and some of them went back to relay provisions up while the remainder camped on his track. The men who went back carried news to camp of what was going on and excitement ran high.

There was a great deal of betting as to whether or not he would be able to shake the crowd. Eventually he had to give up and come back to town, thereby losing his bet. Practically all the men on

this stampede were Cheechakos. I had been on so many of these stampedes myself that I would not go with my dogs unless I was paid for it. I kept a sled loaded with a week's provisions for two men, with my dogs all ready, and sometimes I would start out ten minutes after some excited Cheechako had come for me, blindly following the crowd.

I spent the first part of the summer of 1900 in going up the river a hundred miles or more and cutting logs, bringing them down in rafts to Dawson. There were quite a number of men engaged in this rafting work, which paid quite well at first, though there was a tremendous element of luck in it.

The procedure was this. Two to four men went up the river in a poling boat till they found a good patch of timber growing near the bank. The logs were then cut and rolled into the water, made into a raft, and taken down. This sounds very easy, and it was, provided, as I said before, we had good luck. The rafts were made of a series of log cribs thirty feet square yoked together one behind the other, making a combination thirty feet wide and sometimes from a hundred and twenty to two hundred and forty feet long, depending on the number of cribs the crew could handle. Getting these cribs together when they had been made up on different islands and joining them into the main raft was work of some skill.

The logs were spruce. This timber was the only kind that had any commercial value for house-

building or for sawmill logs. A house-log had to run about ten to twelve inches through at the butt, and had to be quite straight, but not over twenty-four feet long: the ordinary length for a cabin-log was from sixteen to eighteen feet.

We used to put dry logs on the rafts to be sold as firewood, and sometimes the long ground moss, which was very plentiful all over this country, was piled up in a huge stack on top. This moss was used for chinking the cabins. Account of the cabin-logs was always kept, and a man would have a certain number of cabins represented on his raft, with the ridgepoles, place-logs, poles for the roof, and moss for the chinks. If a man was lucky he arrived in Dawson with a complete cabin ready for sale. Later, when the timber had all been cut off the river-banks and we had to go farther afield for logs, making a longer roll necessary, the undertaking became unprofitable.

When the rafts were ready to start, long, heavy sweeps were attached at each end, a tent erected in the middle, and rocks laid down for a fireplace. All the tools were collected and packed in, and a snubbing-post erected at each end. Then we cast off. We worked the raft well away from the shore until, the swift current catching it, the long structure swung out, making a half-turn, when the back sweeps were used and we were off into the main stream.

This was a very critical time, as bad management

was likely to wreck the whole raft before it even got started. I have known an end to be crushed against the bank and the sweeps to be carried away, making the raft a semi-wreck before it got away. With good luck the great cumbersome mass was gradually worked into the swiftest current and if everything went well we never touched ground until we tied up at Dawson.

These trips were sometimes from two hundred and fifty to three hundred miles long. They were possible only because we had the advantage of perpetual daylight at this season of the year. There was no regular time for work on a raft. Sometimes there was absolutely nothing to do but keep the thing parallel with the current for hours on end. Sometimes, however, we would strike on the point of an island or get stuck on a bar or run into a cliff.

A hundred and one things can happen to a raft once they begin, and when things went wrong it was one mad jump all the time. Some rafts seemed to be possessed of the very devil. In spite of everything that could be done we would drift into some blind slough. It was here that the system of a series of cribs showed its good points, as a raft could be taken apart with very little work, and more or less easily handled piecemeal. The cribs would be pulled out of a slough by a Spanish windlass, one by one, and reassembled again in the main stream.

One of the meanest things that could happen, though not a matter of serious importance, was

when in high water a raft would take it into its head to scoot along a cutbank where the trees formed 'sweepers.' These sweepers did their best to sweep everything off, usually with more or less success. The raft always refused to leave the bank until the sweepers had given out. Of course the most serious thing was to be swept against a rocky cliff where the cribs were broken and the logs escaped like a lot of sheep out of a pen.

A peculiar accident happened one day when a raft passed a steamboat coming up the river and crowded it into the bank. The current swept them both toward the shore, the steamboat put on all the power it could before the raft actually shoved it ashore and kicked up such big rollers that the raft went all to pieces. The men sailed off down the river, each on his individual log. No one was drowned, but everything was lost.

When we got to Dawson with a raft, it was nip and tuck how to get out of the main current into the back eddy that swept along the shore and made tying up possible. Once you managed to get into this eddy you were safe, but fully fifty per cent of the rafts were lost when within a few hundred feet of the shore. If you couldn't make the eddy, you were swept down past the cliff at the end of the town, the raft had to be abandoned, and you had to make your way back in a tender. Could you blame a man for going on a spree if he made a successful trip?

In some ways rafting was almost the same as

Mark Twain describes it in his 'Life on the Mississippi,' except that our current was much swifter and we got quick action, whether for good or evil. With good luck we often used to make a hundred miles a day with these rafts. But then again we would frequently be three or four days getting off an island where we had stuck. The management of the rafts may sound comparatively easy, but it really required a lot of skill, and a good raft captain was always a man who was more or less respected.

I was building a raft one time with three men, one of whom had been an old-time bronco-buster and knew more about the desert country than about the river, although he was a first-class man. While at work this man, Billy Woodward, lost his axe overboard off the upstream end of the raft and we couldn't think how to get it back. With a pole we could feel it standing on its head on the bottom, but the current was too swift to get a rope over it and the water so muddy you couldn't see half an inch under the surface.

As the loss was pretty serious to us and I was a fairly good swimmer, I decided to dive for it in about ten or twelve feet of water. We drove a pole into the bottom near the axe and I gave instructions to Billy to hold it secure on the bottom and under no conditions to pull it up, as that would let me swing downstream. Then I stripped and went down the pole, hand over hand. I secured the axe and was about to crawl up the pole again, but at the last minute I

decided to let go the pole. I swam under the raft, crawled up the other side, and sat on the lower end watching Billy hanging onto the pole in the innocence of his heart.

Now Billy knew a man could stay under water a certain length of time, but he didn't know how long, and there he stood with his pole, wiggling it first to the right and then to the left, looking down first with one eye and then with the other like a rooster, while I sat and watched him till I was nearly eaten up by mosquitoes. I shall never forget the disgusted look he gave me when he saw I was sitting on the raft instead of being down under the water as he supposed me to be. I did this when I was young and had not yet learned one of the fundamental rules of the country, which was, never to play a joke on your partner.

Toward the latter part of the summer I decided to go down to the new diggings at Nome, word of which had just reached us. This was a very pleasant trip, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. There were only four or five passengers in all, and as none of us had seen the lower river every turn was of interest, especially when we got to the delta, where we first saw the Eskimos in their skin kayaks. They came out and traded us goose eggs and various other things. They certainly gave us our money's worth, as every egg had a full-fledged gosling in it. These may be all right for an Eskimo to eat, but we weren't educated up to that point.

Arriving at St. Michael's, which is an island about eighty miles up the coast, at the mouth of the Aphoon channel, we had our first view of really clear salt water. Up to that point the mud of the Yukon had followed us and affected all that part of Behring Sea.

The reports from Nome were not very cheerful. Men were leaving it, so I decided to abandon the trip there and engaged passage in an ocean-going tug going down to Seattle. About a week after the tug left, the famous beach diggings at Nome were discovered. This tug was not allowed to carry passengers, so we all signed articles, thirty-five of us, as crew, at a dollar a month, but we paid thirty-five dollars for the privilege. This vessel was engaged in the halibut trade and was allowed to carry this number for a crew.

We touched at Nome, and then headed for the Aleutian Islands, a trip of four days, and one of the roughest I have ever known. The little tug certainly could pitch. As we were all landlubbers, we had to hang onto something all the time to keep from being thrown. I don't know what a one-armed man would have done on her. Captain Joyce of the tug was one of the finest men I have ever known, and did everything possible for our comfort.

Coming into the still waters of Dutch harbor in the Aleutian Islands, we stopped for coal and tied up at the wharf. This was only a few minutes after the terrific rolling and pitching of Behring Sea. We all

piled ashore as quickly as possible and staggered around like drunken men. I was one of the first ashore.

Some little distance from the beach, wonder of wonders! I spied a cow, and two of us stampeded for her. A cow meant milk, and this is the only time that I remember really wanting a drink of milk. The woman who owned the cow sold us milk at twenty-five cents a glass. When we turned back we saw the whole shipload coming up for the same purpose; and it was a wonderful cow, for they all had a drink, but they said that the last glass was very blue.

Dutch Harbor, with what little I saw of the Aleutian Islands, was very interesting. The island where we landed was characterized by tall, conical hills, covered with the greenest grass I have ever seen, and not a tree or bush of any kind in sight. On some of the higher mountains the grass ran all the way up to the snow. This island is cut up into inlets, starting in with very narrow necks and widening out into beautiful lakes, surrounded by the green snow-capped mountains. In some places brooks come down in a series of cataracts, just like any New England meadow brook. In one place a brook dashed over a cliff into the ocean itself. These islands are affected by the Japan Current, and the climate is comparatively mild.

The landlocked bays made a wonderful place for the sealers to hide in when necessary. Years ago the chief industry was hunting the sea-otter, and I guess

it is the only place where they are found even to this day. I know a man who lived twenty-six years on the Aleutian Islands as a sea-otter hunter. As I understand it, white men were not allowed to catch sea-otter, but a white man marrying an Aleut was considered of the tribe, and these men were allowed the same privileges as the natives.

There was a Greek or Russian church, which was holding service at the time we landed. I went in to see it. The priests were Russians, and the congregation mostly native women. The chief memory I have of it is the quantity of old silver everywhere, and my inability to understand a word of the service save 'Alleluia.' I have heard that Greek or Russian churches are scattered all the way down the coast.

A tale was told me by a man named 'Scar-Face Billie' — a hard-luck tale. He was captain of a pelagic sealer. These men in years gone by were rather a tough class, and spent most of their time preying on the Siberian rookeries. They were not allowed in Behring Sea after a certain date in the fall. If they were caught their boats were confiscated by the revenue cutters.

Scar-Face Billie hid in the Aleutian Islands until the revenue cutter Bear had turned south for the winter. His intention was to follow and rob the Greek churches of their plate when they had no one to protect them. But just after getting started on his looting mission he met the revenue cutter coming

back, and wound up his days in Alaska, gold-mining.

A little incident of this sealing life was written up by Kipling in the 'Rhyme of the Three Sealers.' I knew a hunter, afterwards captain of his vessel, who figured in this scrape and carries a scar on the back of his neck from it. He was one of the unknown heroes of the sealing fleet. He fell in love with a girl who couldn't go to sea, although she tried; so he left the sea for her sake and came to Alaska, as the next best thing, where he became one of my best friends. There was really a lot of pathos back of this marriage because he loved the sea and the girl blamed herself for the situation, but it was the happiest marriage I have ever seen.

A few years before he was married, he made a trip to the Pribiloff Islands and picked up almost a full cargo of sealskins. These islands were rented from the United States by the Alaska Commercial Company, and were protected from poachers by the Government, which allowed no vessels within sixty miles of the islands. If a ship was caught nearer than that, it had to give a mighty good account of itself or suffer confiscation. This, of course, was to keep off the seal poachers, and to prevent them from killing the mother seals who were hunting for fish. The patrolling was done by revenue cutters, and it was almost impossible to get by them. But this captain watched his chance. Managing to land on one of the islands, he and his men drove the natives

and whites off at the point of the rifle, clubbed all the seals within reach, and sailed away.

A story went around about him of which no one seemed to know the exact truth. It was well known that he once had a mutiny on board his vessel and quelled it, but how it was done has never been found out. Even the most hardened sealers spoke of it with bated breath. Jack Dustin, of whom I shall speak later, was this captain's mate for several years, and was the only man true to him through the mutiny. The only man I ever saw Jack Dustin give way to was his captain.

The captain had a strange influence, not only over men, but over animals as well, and the story of his life would make an entire book by itself. I was going on a prospecting trip one summer with him and several other men, and we bought a mule to carry our stuff. As soon as the mule was delivered to us, we wanted to pack him and start off immediately. The mule had his front legs hobbled and had been turned out to graze.

He couldn't run away, neither could anybody catch him because he stood on his two front hobbled legs and was nothing but a whirling mass of heels to any one who approached him from any direction. We all tried it, in bunches and singly, to our detriment and disgust, except Captain Major, who, after we had all tried our hands at everything except roping him, calmly walked up to the mule, took his hobbles off, and took him by the head, while the

mule greeted him as a long-lost friend. After the animal was blindfolded we were able to pack him.

These mules all had to be blindfolded by a wide leather strap while they were being loaded, and would never allow themselves to be packed unless this strap was put on. However, the old ones often were perfectly contented if the strap were merely hung over one ear, whether it covered their eyes or not. A mule certainly is a strange beast.

I had a little canoe with me at Dutch Harbor, and while the tug was coaling I set off with another man on a voyage of discovery. We went through a narrow inlet between Dutch Harbor and Unalaska, which opened out into a circular lagoon with the steep green hills all around it. In this absolutely safe place there was a schooner anchored. We wondered how she ever got in, as the neck we had come in by was too narrow for her, but we found later that the opening into still another lagoon was wider, and that there were two or three of these lagoons in a string, the last one with a very wide exit into Behring Sea.

In our lagoon we found a large black whale, and my companion wanted to tackle it in our canoe with nothing more than a shotgun for weapon. I presume he was bluffing, but he certainly got me. We spent about eight hours exploring altogether, and, as it was too rough to go into Behring Sea and we really didn't know where we were, I climbed to the top of a tall hill to find out if I could see anything of Dutch

Harbor. To my surprise it was just below me, under the hill. So we pulled our canoe up one side of the hill and slid it down the other.

We saw a lot of bald eagles on our little exploring trip. They were very tame and seemed to go about in flocks. One of them was sitting on a rock when we passed in our canoe. It was so tame I thought it must have been a pet.

After we went on board the tug the captain produced a lot of fish-lines and told us to get to work, which we did. We began to haul up codfish as fast as we could put our lines down, and in a very short time we had caught all the fish we could take care of on the trip down. As we journeyed south the spirits of the passengers seemed to rise with the temperature. All kinds of jokes and horse-play went on. We slept on deck in the glorious weather. We saw a great many whales, but these had no commercial value and were not hunted at that time.

When we had been out a couple of days the captain informed us that food was very low and the coal giving out, as he had not been able to replenish his stores at Dutch Harbor. He gave us our choice of making a twenty-four-hour trip out of our way to a near-by port, or keeping straight on our way and going for twenty-four hours without food. We chose the latter course and headed for Fort Simpson in Departure Bay, but toward the last we had to tear up the boards of the false deck to stoke our boilers. We were hungry, but most of us had been hungry

for so many twenty-four-hour periods before this that it was no hardship.

Port Simpson was an uninteresting place, except for the beautiful totem poles and the Indian graveyard there. The trip after that was down the Inside Passage, the regular tourist route. It is very beautiful and I have never grown tired of it. On every trip I have noticed different things.

CHAPTER XI

RUNNING THE YUKON WITH SCOWS

We eventually arrived in Seattle and were all paid off, the captain giving each of us a fifty-cent piece, which we immediately gave back to him and he gave it to the next man. I stayed in Seattle till my money was all gone. I had to borrow enough to get up the coast again, going back the same way I came out, except for stopping at Skagway instead of Dyea.

When I reached Skagway I had no idea how I'd make my way down the Yukon, since the funds I'd borrowed were used up. But luck has always been good to me. I ran across a man who was preparing to take a fleet of scows down the river, and he was very anxious to get somebody who knew something about river work to help him run them down. The scows were to be loaded mostly with iron pipe for thawing machinery in the Yukon. So we struck a bargain.

The freight was first taken over the Yukon Railroad, the new line which had just been built across the White Pass to Lake Bennett, a distance of thirty-five miles. This was the first time I had ever been on a railroad in Alaska, and it certainly was a contrast to the time I had come in with the 'Big Rush.' It was nice to feel myself sliding along this way, to look down into the valley to the place where

the trail used to go, where we had crawled along for days to make what we now did in hours. But the romance had gone.

At Lake Bennett there was a sawmill, where they manufactured scows and boats for the down-river trips. The scows were made of two-inch planking, forty-two feet long, and twelve feet wide, with straight sides. They were square at both ends, but sheered up like a barge, with pointed outriggers running out about eight feet at the bow and stern, and a long heavy sweep at the end. They were decked fore and aft for eight feet, with the middle open, and a plank ran around the sides to walk on.

Each scow had a mast about twenty feet high, rigged with a large square sail. The mast was set about eight feet back of the bow, so that a man could work the sweep in front of it. Sails were used only when crossing the lakes. Usually a tent was placed over the cockpit in the middle. After the cargo was loaded, this was where the crew lived, cooking on a little sheet-iron stove. The scows were unpainted, were capable of carrying twenty tons, and drew from twenty-four to twenty-six inches. This was the standard freight scow and cost five hundred dollars at that time. When they reached their destination their job was finished. They were absolutely worthless except for firewood.

When we arrived at Lake Bennett the season was already advanced and the nights were dark. We finished our loading late one evening, but as a favor-

able wind was blowing we decided to make the run across Lake Bennett that night. The crew consisted of four men to a scow. None of them except the owner and myself had done any river work or had been in the country before. It was a risky thing for the owner to run the river with green help, but it was impossible to get regular river hands. He took charge of two of the scows, and I took two. Three of the men had their wives with them.

We started to cross Lake Bennett as darkness was coming on, the owner first, to show the way, then two scows, and lastly myself as whipper-in. Each boat was soon lost to sight in the darkness except for its white sail. At first everything went nicely. The lake was smooth, the breeze steady, and the steering easy. But the farther we went down the lake the harder the wind blew, and the more the waves rose.

Soon the sea became so choppy that waves began to come on board and pumps were put in commission. The next thing we knew a little bateau that our scow had in tow was thrown on board and smashed. When we reached a bend in the lake and the wind struck us a little more on the quarter, we had to put all four men on the sweep. Still, dark as it was, I could see the three sails in front of me.

Then an extra heavy puff of wind carried our sail away, breaking the upper yard off, but leaving the rope in the block. It was now impossible to keep the scow before the wind, in spite of using both sweeps. If we turned broadside on, it was just a question of

time before we should be swamped. The only thing to do was to climb the mast and pull the rope down, so that we could make it fast to the sail and hoist it up again. This was the stiffest climb I have ever tried. But I managed to make it somehow, got hold of the rope, and pulled it down, tying it around the upper part of the sail.

This was a great help in steadying the scow. Furthermore, knotting the sail up like that took a reef in it. After we had got some headway on I looked for the other scows and found they were lost in the darkness. I supposed they had outsailed us, but not being sure of anything, and not knowing whether I could weather it to the foot of the lake if the gale came up any stronger, I gradually worked the scow over as near as possible to the shore on the windward side looking for some inlet to get into.

Absolutely by accident we found one — the nicest little cove, behind a rocky cliff. All we could see of it in the darkness was the gap in the breakers that lined the shore. We slipped through this, and all felt better after landing on the sand beach and pumping the scow out. Here we were protected from the fury of the wind and had nothing to do but wait for daylight. Of course the first thing to do after an experience of this kind was to eat.

When morning came I went up on the rocky headland to find out if I could see anything of the other scows, but they had completely disappeared. There was a heavy wind still blowing and a rough sea, but

DOWN THE BIG RIVER BY SCOW TO THE GOLD DIGGINGS

it was daylight and we decided to go out. We kept a sharp lookout for the lost scows all the way down the lake, but could see nothing of them until we got to Caribou Crossing where we found the owner with his scow waiting for us.

He had had much the same experience as ours. His sail had blown away and he had got into a cove; but it was nearer the foot of the lake. What had become of the other scows we didn't know, as neither of us had seen anything of them and none of the men who had come down the lake after us had seen them either.

We began to think they must have been lost. We went on down to Tagish Lake and Tagish Houses, where there was a small steamer. The owner of our outfit chartered this to go back and look for his lost scows. But, just as he was starting out, down came the two missing scows, with a long tale of woe. The same squall which had carried away our sail had carried theirs away too, and they also had lost their bateaus. They had been washed ashore in different places, and swamped, spending the night in the woods. Next morning they pumped their scows out and were able to make the rest of the trip.

Between here and White Horse Rapids everything went well. At the head of the canyon it was decided to hire a professional pilot to take us through. The boats were stripped for action. The tent was taken down and nailed over the cockpit to keep the water out. A bulwark four feet high was

rigged up in front of the mast and two sweeps were put in the bow. The pilot and I worked on the back sweep together. The two men handling the front sweeps were roped around their waists, so that they could not be washed overboard.

Each scow was then cut loose in turn, a quarter of a mile above the canyon, and dropped down under the orders of the pilot until the canyon was actually reached. There the noise was so terrific that it was impossible to hear any orders. The men forward were to keep the bow as near the crest of the wave as possible. The steersman swung the stern to right or left, so as to 'make it follow its nose,' as they say on the river. The scows were not tied up until they had gone through the canyon, the Squaw Rapids, and the White Horse, a distance of three miles.

Three of our scows went through successfully. But as we had to walk back three miles to the head of the rapids each time to bring down another scow, and as the pilot would not use any sweep except his own pet, which had to be lugged along too, it was dark before we got back for the last scow. I was rather surprised when he informed me that we must get her ready, as he wanted to get back to supper. I had never heard of any one attempting the rapids after dark. But he said that he had done it once before, and, as he was taking the fleet through by contract, he was going through that night.

I think the weirdest thing that ever came my way was when we started down that dark river. As we

drew into the mouth of the canyon the scow went with a bound, down over the first roller, as it would over a dam, to rise almost on end over the crest of the second. Everything was white with foam around us. The black walls of the canyon shot past. The darkness seemed intensified by the deafening roar.

The pilot leaned over and bawled in my ear, 'Looks like the mouth of Hell,' and it certainly did, as far as I know. The men standing on the forward deck were sometimes buried waist-deep in foaming water when the scow buried her nose in the rollers. But the bulkhead at the mast prevented the waves from sweeping the whole length of the scow, and we at the stern were only drenched by the back-lash that followed us. The darkness seemed to accentuate the pitching of the scow and it was all we could do to keep our feet.

It was a beautiful piece of piloting. We got through without even touching, and tied up safely with our little flotilla, wet but happy. The pilot got a hundred dollars for this day's work and he certainly earned it.

This man had the reputation of being the best pilot on this section of river. But on his next trip, when he snubbed his boat up in the swift water, after the rapids had been run, he became entangled in the running hawser and stripped the flesh from one leg. It had to be amputated, which of course ended his career as a pilot. If I remember rightly, the man's name was Green.

The rest of the trip down to Lake La Barge was uneventful. When we arrived at the lake, which is the longest in the string, the owner of the scows decided to make sure that we didn't have a repetition of what had happened on Lake Bennett. He had his outfit all hitched behind a small stern-wheel steamer to be towed down the lake.

The day was fine when we started. But the wind soon sprang up in a gale and the steamer was unable to keep us in line. The boats slacked up on each other and came up with a snap on the tow-line, and this raised havoc with the outriggers. Being on the lookout for the safety of my own two scows, and having no faith in the steamer, I had taken the precaution to be the last boat, with my running mate just ahead of me.

I had told them whatever happened to keep near me and do as I did. So when I cut loose and raised the sail, they did the same and so did the two scows in front of us. It was hoist sail and scamper as quickly as possible. I made a good get-away, but my other scow, following me and cutting corners, began to overtake me and run me down, and to save a collision I was driven toward the shore at the lower part of the lake.

It was impossible to tack with these scows with the wind against us. In fact they were very hard to steer with a quartering wind, even with four men on the sweep. Seeing myself gradually being pushed off the course, and since the others were unable to keep

any headway on their scow and were no sailors into the bargain, I yelled and waved them to keep off and make straight for the outlet. I could see them talking together, but they seemed unable to understand my gestures or what I said.

Realizing that I should soon be run down or driven ashore, as a last desperate resort I dropped down into the cockpit, brought up my rifle, and put a ball through their sail. I thought they would understand this and take the hint, and they certainly did. But they threw their scow around so quickly that the sail was taken aback and when it filled again with a rush the mast was carried away.

They were now helpless, and as I could do nothing for them I was glad to see the little steamer hurrying to their rescue. But to reach them it was obliged to turn broadside to the wind and waves, and was soon driven ashore and swamped. The steamers used on the rivers and upper lakes had a very shallow draft. With their large paddle-wheel behind, and being a great deal higher above than below water-line, they were almost unmanageable if they got broadside to the wind.

My second scow, now helpless, drifted back and was washed ashore and swamped. The other two scows and my own were just able to get into the mouth of the river. Here we tied up and went to the rescue of our fourth scow, but we could do nothing until the waves went down next day, when she was pumped out and warped offshore.

From here on we were hoping to have an easier time, as wind wouldn't trouble us. Also the green hands were getting more used to the work. But bad luck had its claws on us that trip and didn't relax until we tied up at Dawson.

Our next troubles came in Thirty-Mile River, which is swift and clear and full of boulders. Here the unlucky scow got stuck on a sandbar. I attempted to make a landing about a mile below, to help them out. Landings in swift water are made by working the scow close to the bank and, just before it actually touches, taking a swing around with the sweep so that the bow points upstream. This brings the scow close in to the bank, with the stern inclining out, and enables a man to jump ashore with the end of a long cable and make it fast to whatever he can find. It prevents the water from rushing in between the scow and the bank and carrying it out into the stream again.

Everything went nicely until the strain came on the cable. This was wrapped three times around the snubbing-post on the scow and gradually paid out; but the tree around which the man had taken his hitch came out by the roots. The tree bounded about every which way, and the man couldn't get near it to unhitch the cable. We promptly swung into midstream and started down the river. Then the big tree got jammed behind a boulder on the shore and the cable parted.

This necessitated our going a considerable dis-

tance downstream and making another landing. We did it successfully this time, using our short cable, and we also picked up our lost man. By the time we had made fast and walked back to the scow that was stuck on the sandbar we found that they had been able to get her off by themselves, but had got stuck on another sandbar farther down. The upshot was that we all tied up to the bank that night at different places and waited for daylight.

The owner having left his tow-line on the steamer, we divided a new two-inch cable between us, making about two hundred and fifty feet apiece. To take the kinks out of it we allowed it to drag downstream from the scow that night. Next morning the rope was stiff with water and we coiled it on the outrigger.

We started in our usual line of march, with myself in the rear. As I came around a bend I found two scows stuck again, one of them being the owner's. This time we attempted to make a landing where the current was very swift. The man who carried the rope ashore was able to hitch it around a large firm spruce, but the man who was doing the snubbing on the boat was able to get only two turns instead of three, with the result that the rope began to slip through his hands.

I was in the stern, steering, and, seeing that we were about to lose our new cable, I ran forward to pick up a few layers of the coil that were still left, so as to be able to throw a third turn around the post.

The snubber, in his ardor to get out of my way, fell backwards and I tumbled over his legs, landing on a pile of rapidly uncoiling rope. The next thing I knew I was overboard and under water, with the rope snarled around one leg, and was slowly turning over as the rope untwisted. It was impossible to reach the surface, but I gradually pulled myself up by my own leg till I could get hold of the rope, still under water. My idea was to crawl up it till I could free my leg. This put me almost in a sitting posture, but the force of the current was so great that I didn't have the strength to go any farther.

Hooking my left arm around the rope I reached for my sheath-knife and found an empty sheath. All this time I was slowly revolving and I could see the bubbles on the surface, away above me. The only thing I could think of was a dead dog we had passed a short time before, which somebody had drowned with a stone around its neck, and I pictured his body all worn away by the current. Things had come to about their last gasp when all of a sudden I was swept downstream, the rope dropped off me, and I was free. I was just able to swim to the bank and was lying in the shallow water trying to get my strength back when the man who had gone ashore with the rope came running down and pulled me out.

What had happened was this. The rope had made a half-hitch around my leg. What remained of the large coils followed me and lay behind me. The man

on the bank had made two turns and one half-hitch around the tree, but didn't have rope enough left before it tightened to make a second hitch. He was holding the end ready, when the strain should come. Seeing me go overboard, and not knowing I could swim, he had let the rope go and had run down the bank to try to rescue me. In the meantime the current, pushing against me, had gradually worked the rope loose at the other end, and the whole thing came away, freeing me. Of course I was pretty glad to get on land, as darkness was coming on, it was late in the fall, and it was cold. My matches were wet and my rescuer had none.

We were then five miles above the Hootalinqua River. Our scow had floated off down the river somewhere, with two men and a woman on her and no snub-line. So we walked down the bank together, climbing over blow-downs, till all of a sudden, some distance ahead of us, we saw the mast of our scow. Of course, knowing that the cable was gone we thought she had drifted into some eddy and was likely to depart at any moment, and of all the mad runs I have ever put in I think this was the maddest. Jumping over fallen trees, crashing through bushes, I finally wound up by rolling down a steep bank almost on top of the scow.

Here we found everything snug and safe, the scow tied up to bushes by four little half-inch lines. And this was their story. After I had disappeared overboard the scow began to waltz down the bank, shift-

ing ends every little while, breaking the outriggers, but doing no real damage. The husband of the woman on board lost his head and wanted to jump ashore, and the second man had his hands full trying to keep the other on board. But the woman ran forward and cut guy lines from our abandoned sail. With these she and the other man managed to tie up to some bushes as the scow slowed down in an eddy.

So far so good. But we had used up all our spare clothing and there was nothing for me to do but put on an extra outfit of Mrs. Hand's. As we were eating supper I heard a voice sing out in the darkness, 'Stand by to board that scow!' and I realized that one of our other scows had seen the light from our tent and was going to try to snub up to us. Knowing that the weight of a mosquito would break us loose, I rushed on deck, dancing up and down, and using language no lady should use, vowing sudden death on any man who dared to jump on our scow: anything to keep them off. They slid by us very close and disappeared in the darkness in intense silence.

Just before turning in, we got a hail from the shore, and we recognized the owner's voice. He hesitated some little time, and asked what we thought were foolish questions. As we all came on deck, he came on board. He looked bewildered when he saw two women instead of one, looked again, and burst out laughing. I had had about enough, with the teasing I had gone through before

he arrived, and I said something to that effect, but he only laughed still more.

His story was that when he had passed us in the darkness he had recognized what he thought was Mrs. Hand, but had heard her extraordinary language. Suddenly he remembered a story he had heard in his youth, a tale in which the whole crew of a vessel had been murdered by the captain's wife who had gone crazy. So he had come back to see what the trouble was, and his crew had refused to follow him till daylight. He had his six-shooter on.

Through all the rest of the trip, from the mouth of the Hootalinqua down, the scows with the Cheechakos in charge were perpetually in trouble and had to be helped, until we got to within a day or so of Dawson. Then the situation was reversed; we got into trouble, and they beat us in. Since it was so late in the season the river had begun to flow with ice, which didn't help matters for any of us. It made the upper current slow and sometimes forced us out of our course, into places that were hard to get out of. We were all glad when we finally got to Dawson.

The whole trip had taken us almost a month. This was my last experience in flatboating. However, our troubles on this trip did not compare with those of the men who followed us later and got caught in the freeze-up. Thirty-one scows were either swamped or forced up high and dry by the ice onto some islands, where they had to be abandoned.

CHAPTER XII

ROBBERS AND CROWDED TRAILS

About two weeks later I again started for the outside, this time with my dog-team and my old partner Fred Fay. Our plan was to make a fast trip out, go to Seattle, buy more dogs, hire a couple of men to help us drive back, and come in with four teams loaded with things Dawson lacked, which would bring high prices.

My team this year consisted of a leader who was three quarters wolf, together with Alaskan Malamutes and half-breeds, two of which were the pick of those I had brought in from Lake Winnipeg. This team was not a matched string, but they were wonderful travelers — the fastest in Dawson that year.

The wolf leader was a remarkable dog, and is worthy of a more detailed description. As far as I know he was stolen a year before from the Eskimos somewhere near Kaltag, brought up on one of the river steamers, and sold to me. His whole appearance was that of a pure-bred wolf. He was light gray and white, and weighed almost a hundred and twenty pounds. His eyes were set obliquely in his head and there was very little drop to the forehead. His muzzle was fine, and even his teeth did not resemble those of a dog. He carried his tail low, wolf-

fashion. He was absolutely tireless, and a remarkable trail-finder.

After I got him broken in, he was the quickest dog to obey I have ever known, and would face anything without hesitation. But he still had the wolf nature, and I could not catch him if he were loose unless I dragged out the harness. If I did that he would come and take his place at the lead. He would never associate with the other dogs, and would turn his back on a fight; but if he was forced to it, he would lick the whole bunch to a standstill. I have never seen his equal as a fighter when he was really forced to it.

On the trail at night, when he was unharnessed, he would immediately go back into the forest and would not appear until feeding time. Then he would come out from a different direction from the one he had gone in. After eating he would disappear again, and would not come back till harnessing time next morning. I never saw him show emotion of any kind, either in response to kindness or because of discipline. I never saw him wag his tail, but occasionally he would lead the whole band in howling to the wolves.

On glare ice he was able not only to keep his footing but to pull, when it was all that the rest of the team could do to keep their footing at all. He was always pulling, whether the team was going fast or slow. This dog's name was Hootchinoo. He was well known in the country at that time, and as

far as I know was the original of Jack London's 'White Fang.' I didn't discover until later that his mother was half wolf, and his father a wild wolf.

There were so many road-houses by this time that dog-food and provisions could be bought along the route. So as we came out on our trip to civilization we were not heavily loaded. But the ice was new and very rough, and in a good many places the river was still open, compelling us to take to the bank, on which was bad going.

From White Horse Rapids to Lake Bennett we changed from our accustomed route. They were building an extension of the railroad from the head of Lake Bennett to below White Horse Rapids. By following the route of the new line we cut out some of the lakes. The construction camps were still at work when we came through, but they soon had to close down on account of the cold weather. Being assured that we could find comfortable quarters at these different camps, both going and coming back later, we left our outfit, including our robes, at a road-house at White Horse. This was the first time I ever abandoned my robe and it was the last.

They had camps here where the men slept in large tents in tiers of bunks as tight as they could be packed, with two stoves to each tent. At each of these places there were about two hundred and fifty horses. These horses were packed in tents, in rows of four, as close as they could stand. They were fed out of canvas mangers, which were taken

away after each feeding. There were no blankets for them and they never lay down. Very little hay was given them, but they received thirty quarts of oats a day, and were in first-class condition. These horses weighed from fourteen hundred to sixteen hundred pounds each and were of the draft type. A veterinarian presided over each camp, and I must say the horses were a credit to him. This way of taking care of horses was a new one to me.

At one of these camps a new lot of men had just arrived, and every bunk and corner was crowded. My partner managed to find part of a bunk, but I was compelled to sleep on sacks of oats in a cold tent with a quilt over me, which was all the bedding I could obtain. This quilt was so short that it wouldn't cover my head and feet at the same time unless I curled up, and I spent most of the night tramping up and down to get warmed up. I certainly was glad to hear the cook's horn in the morning.

By making an extra long day's run we got to the town of Bennett next night. This completed a trip of almost six hundred miles in thirteen and a half days, which was good time considering how bad the traveling was. Here we left our dogs and took the train. At Skagway we succeeded in making a close boat connection and went on to Seattle. This was almost a record trip.

In Seattle our troubles began. The work of picking up twenty-four good dogs and some rather unusual freight, part of which we had telegraphed to

New York for, caused a delay of about two weeks. When at last everything was on board the boat and we got started, the steamer had the bad luck to break one of the four blades of her propeller. She had to be run aground and the opposite blade sawed off so that the screw would balance. Then we staggered up the coast and it took about double the usual time to make the trip. Still we were in advance of the rush of men who were in the same business as ourselves.

Arriving at Skagway we lost no time in having our freight started over the summit on the railroad. But a heavy storm blew up and a snow-slide came down the mountain that blocked the train from going more than halfway up. When it attempted to back down, another snow-slide came down and blocked the road back of it. A rotary plough was sent up and was wrecked by running into some rocks that had been brought down by the snow-slide. Following that, storm after storm tied up the line so completely that it stayed blocked for twenty-three days. As we were not allowed to take our freight out of the car in transit, there was nothing to do but wait in Skagway till the track was cleared.

In the meantime steamer after steamer kept piling in with men and goods for the interior. The town became totally congested with men, provisions, horses, and dogs, and more were arriving on every boat. There was no use in driving over to Lake

Bennett with our dogs, as men were coming away from there on account of the scarcity of provisions.

When the track was clear, trains began to run, but not on schedule. As soon as freight finally moved, we started out with our dogs. We followed up the old trail for part of the way, driving our four teams, then took to the railway track after reaching the summit. This was very beautiful. In some places the mountain rose sheer on one side for a thousand feet or more, with the wet snow corniced out for many feet. With all its beauty we couldn't help but wonder what would happen if it broke loose in a snow-slide. These tracks, I believe, are now covered with snow-sheds, constructed in such a way against the rock that the slides merely strike them and shoot off.

We followed down the cut the rotary plough had made, which was perfectly straight up and down as if cut with a knife, and twelve feet or more high on either side. It was impossible to get out until you got farther down the mountain. We were all more or less nervous, and when one of our men yelled that he heard a train coming we thought we were done for. We couldn't tell which way it was coming, up grade or down. If it were coming down grade there would be no help for us, as it would be coming fast.

It turned out a little later to be no more than the sound of the wind in the telegraph wires, but we were certainly glad when the snow shoaled and we

could crawl out any time we wanted to. Also the sharp curves in the track had ceased and we could see far ahead. Down in the valley we then sighted the train, just leaving Bennett.

Our twenty-four new dogs were mostly what were called 'outside dogs,' which meant anything not native to the country. Native dogs were spoken of as 'inside dogs.' Our teams had been broken in while we were in Skagway, but they were not inured to the hard traveling. At Bennett I picked up my old team, which had been waiting for me there. To this team I gave an extra heavy load, so that the other teams would have a chance to keep up with me, but even at that the trip was one of the hardest I ever made.

Each team consisted of six dogs, harnessed tandem and drawing two sleds in the approved freight fashion. During the forenoons the teams kept pretty well together, but in the afternoons the 'outside' dog-teams got so tired that the men had to drop the extra sleds in order to reach the next camp. As my dogs were stronger I went ahead, made camp, and came back and picked them up. The weather was very cold. Before we got to our journey's end we had lost eight of the green dogs.

The roughest places on the river ice had been smoothed out by the traffic, so that it was possible for horses to travel on it. There were a great many teams on the road, taking high-priced provisions into Dawson. One man had a hundred and forty

head of stock, including horses and prime beef cattle. The horses were loaded down with fodder for themselves and for the cattle. As the loads diminished, the cattle were killed and put on the sleds. This enterprising man was under a terrific expense, as he had been held up so long in Skagway. Before he got to Dawson he lost all the money he had invested. All the horse-teams were of course single teams. One man could take charge of four or five of them. They made very much slower time than the dogs did.

Most of the time we camped out, for reasons of economy, as we saw already that the trip would be a financial failure. Camping out with domesticated dogs meant that we had to take the dogs into the tent with us. Our tent was only eight by ten. It had to hold a stove, four men with their robes, and all the dogs, who came in last and piled on top of us.

The dogs were chased out the first thing in the morning, so that we could get up. Then the man who was doing the cooking would always have to set up the stove, as it got knocked down by the crowd at night. I cooked for the dogs on an outside camp-fire, feeding them and looking after them while the other two men cut wood for us all.

One morning I found that there wasn't a dog in sight. Picking up the trail I followed it and met them coming back. They certainly looked satisfied and I wondered who had involuntarily fed them. After we had broken camp and gone about a mile

and a half, we passed two unharnessed horse-sleds belonging to a horse outfit whose owners had not yet got up. We had heard of these as being loaded with all sorts of luxuries, such as choice cuts of meat, various kinds of fish, frogs' legs, and so on. To save weight the men had stuck frozen halibut on edge around their sleds for side-boards, and had covered the whole thing with canvas.

Our dogs had smelled food, paid them a visit during the night, and eaten holes in the halibut to attack whatever was inside. We didn't investigate, as we wanted to get by as quickly as possible. The owners apparently had camped some little distance from the trail, and because they had horses themselves thought their load was safe. I think their language would have been worth hearing when eventually they discovered what had happened. Such is the luck of the trail.

Two men caught up with us one night at a roadhouse. They were traveling light, with only two dogs, and so both men were compelled to walk. When the rest of us sat down at the long table at supper, one of these men remained on the deacon seat, where he began eating something that he took out of a bottle and mixed with warm water. A man asked him if he was too good to eat with common folks. He replied that he had come into the Yukon to gain strength, as he was almost dying of dyspepsia. He went on to say that he didn't care much if he did die, as life was a burden to him.

We told him what a wonderful country the Yukon was for just that thing, and assured him that he would be eating bacon and beans before the year was out. We did this from kindness, seeing that he was almost used up. He was making the long tramp of twenty-five to thirty miles a day between road-houses on baby food, or whatever it was, and would come in at the end of a day absolutely used up.

Six months later I met this man, and didn't recognize him. He slapped me on the back and asked if I didn't remember him. He declared that the Yukon was the best country in the world and that he was eating bacon and beans as well as any man, though he didn't know whether he would ever dare leave the country or not. His treatment had certainly been a kill-or-cure method.

It took us almost a month to make our trip from the outside, and I lost my wolf leader soon after getting in. I think he actually worked himself to death. My partner was so used up he never took any more trips. We didn't even recover all the money we had invested on the venture, to say nothing of the wasted time.

I don't know a single man who tried this game who didn't lose on it in the end. Good beef had been selling at two dollars and a half a pound when we left Dawson to go to Seattle, but soon after a party of men went up the Klondike, found the winter grounds of the caribou, killed twenty-five hundred of them, and were giving freighters two carcasses for

dragging one down. This meat was selling at thirty cents a pound by the carcass, which made the price of other meat drop. One man came in from the outside about this time with five tons of porter-house steak. Of course he went broke. Champagne was now selling at four dollars a bottle, which was about the same price as in Seattle. Beer, however, was selling for seven dollars and a half a bottle, and even then it was obtainable only in the boxes of the theaters. The result was that nobody drank champagne.

Our plan when we started on our venture to the outside had been to get back early, so that we could run down to Nome on the ice, a distance of about eighteen hundred miles, and arrive there in time for the opening of the beaches. But we had lost so much time on our trip that there was no point in starting. We should have gotten only halfway down and then have had to wait till the water opened. So I spent the rest of the winter in freighting.

This winter there was a series of murders on the Yukon Trail. The road-houses were so close together that men could walk from one to the next, traveling alone. No register was kept at these places, and, as the owners weren't acquainted with men, no one knew what had happened when a man started from Dawson for the outside and didn't reach his destination. Spring alone, with the melting of the snow, would clear up the mystery.

Two men who planned to rob pedestrians put up

their tent on a bend of the river where they could watch for several miles either way. They pretended to be prospecting up the creek that came in at this point. Their camp site was selected with extreme cleverness. It was near an open place in the river, which never froze up. They had a track down to this spot to get water. The two did a good deal of hunting and brought their game into camp, so that any blood spots around the tent wouldn't mean anything.

The tent of these hold-up men was near the trail. Their method was as follows. In that sparsely settled country it was the custom, when you passed a tent or camp, to stop and speak to the owner. If he occupied a tent, the visitor would usually thrust his head between the flaps and look in before untying the opening and going in.

When these hold-up men saw a pedestrian coming up the trail alone, they would divide, one going behind the tent with his axe, while the other fellow sat inside. When the visitor was in the right position with his head between the flaps of the tent, the man outside ran around and hit him on the back of the head with the pole of the axe, either killing him or stunning him badly. The men then went through his things, lugged him out, and dropped him into the open water. At once he would be carried under the ice.

When the break-up in the spring came, by some unaccountable freak of the current several of the bodies lodged on an island just below the robbers'

camp. Of course it was a give-away and it didn't take the Mounted Police long to arrest the men, who afterwards made a confession. If I am not mistaken, they had killed seven or more men. These occurrences were known as the 'Clayton murders,' because Clayton was one of the unfortunate victims and was a prominent man.

There was another case of robbery with a happier ending, that happened between Forty-Mile and Circle City. An outbound mail-carrier overtook a man who was hauling a hand-sled. He offered to take the man's robe and some of his stuff on his sled, and suggested that they travel and camp together until they got to Forty-Mile.

They had been together one or more days when the mail-carrier was awakened one night by a terrific blow on the head. As he was under his robe its thickness prevented him from being stunned. He was able to roll out and discovered his guest about to repeat the blow. He managed to seize him round both legs, throw him backwards, and tie him up. The man calmly told the mail-carrier he would have got him the first crack had it not been for the fact that the axe twisted in his hand because he had only two fingers on one hand.

The mail-carrier kept the man with him, driving him ahead to break trail. At night he trussed him up and stuffed him into a robe where he had to stay quiet till morning. Eventually he delivered the culprit to the police.

Conditions grew so bad this year that a dog-driver, if alone and camping anywhere along the main trail, would build his camp and leave the fire burning, but take his robe and sleep a few hundred yards away. His dogs were in no sense of the word watchdogs, and would never give the alarm. This was in striking contrast to the conditions prevailing the previous spring, when I found a man lying beside me on my bed of boughs one morning whom I had never seen before. This was in the spring when people were traveling any time in the twenty-four hours. He had dropped in late, and not wishing to disturb me had used my fire and bed, knowing he was sure of a welcome, no matter who I was.

Just before the break-up a man named Tony Elffner and I bought a boat about twenty-three feet long, decked her fore and aft, and built a small cabin, into which we could manage to crawl on our hands and knees. We put on a sweep, as a rudder would be useless unless we were actually sailing. Stocking it with what provisions we should need on the way, Tony and I started down the river immediately after the break-up.

For the first hundred miles it was impossible to make a landing, as the walls of ice on either side were perfectly perpendicular. With our four dogs on the little front deck and the fifth always in the way on the back deck where the steersman sat, we were pretty well crowded. Our cooking was done on a little Primus stove, the first that had been brought into the country.

We found out one thing, and that was that our sail was of no use on the river, as what wind there was blew upstream at that time of year. In fact, I don't think we had five miles of sailing until we reached salt water, and all the time our mast was very much in the way on account of sweepers.

After we left the ice-canyons the trip was a delightful one all the way down. Our dogs were let out on the shore for as long as they wanted to run, while we drifted along the bank. When they got tired they would swim out to us and we would lift them aboard.

All went well until we ran out of tobacco. Every one leaving that year to go to Nome in a small boat had an idea that provisions and other necessities could be bought cheaper the farther down the river you went. This would very likely have been true if there had been anything to buy. But there wasn't. There was a tobacco famine all the way down to St. Michael's. When two boats on opposite sides of the river saw each other, they would immediately begin to draw together, and the first hail was, 'Hello, partner, have you got any tobacco?' which nobody ever had.

We stopped at Fort Yukon for a few hours, and they told me of a killing that had taken place the day before. Some time later I heard the story of what had caused it. Two men owned a rich claim in the Klondike. One of them got into some sort of trouble, and rather than be arrested he went down

the river to the American side. He gave his partner a bill of sale to do whatever he wanted to do with the claim, with the verbal understanding that they would share equally whatever was realized from it.

The claim was sold, and a friend of the fugitive's, who knew of the sale and heard that the other partner was going to leave the country by the lower river route, brought the news to his friend who was waiting at Fort Yukon. When the steamer stopped at Fort Yukon, on the way down, with the partner on board, the fugitive accosted him and asked him where his share of the money was. The answer was that there wasn't any money coming to him. 'Then you refuse to give me my half of the money?' 'Yes,' said the partner. The reply was a bullet through the brain.

The man then went back to Dawson and gave himself up to the Mounted Police. They gave him a fair trial. Judge Dugas, after condemning the man to death, got up from his seat, addressed the court-room in general, and finished by saying, 'This is the hardest thing I have ever had to do in my life, because under the same circumstances I should have done exactly the same thing myself.' Then he put his head down on the bench and cried. I was told that the only dry eyes in the court-room were those of the condemned man. The year before at a Miners' Meeting on the American side, this man would have been acquitted. Such is the difference between justice and the fulfillment of the law.

We did not know enough to light our Primus stoves with kerosene and a wick. We thought that you had to use alcohol to get the burner started. One day I broke our alcohol bottle and so we were badly stuck. When we arrived at a Protestant mission I went up to the missionary's house, as he didn't take the trouble to come down to meet me, and asked him if he would sell me a little alcohol. He jumped to the conclusion that I wanted to drink it, and began to give me a lecture on temperance. The upshot was that I left him in a rage, and he probably had a worse idea of the Yukon miner than before. I certainly had a worse idea of the missionary.

A few days afterwards we arrived at Holy Cross Mission. My partner, after a good deal of persuasion, got me to go up to see the priest on the same errand. Here the priest came down to meet me and seemed glad to see me. I made my request in practically the same words I had used the other time. The priest said he wouldn't sell me any alcohol, as he hadn't very much left himself, but he would give me a little. He took it for granted that I was going to use it for some good purpose. We parted the best of friends.

One day, while our boat was tied up at an Indian village and we were talking to the Indians, another boat stopped, with three men in it. One man got out and walked up to the village. As soon as his back was turned, the other two men pushed the boat off

and started down the river. The man on shore took a gun from an Indian who was standing near by. He put one ball behind the boat, the next in front of it, and then one right through the gunwale between the two men. He did this very coolly and slowly. Thereupon the boat was immediately headed for shore, some bags were thrown out, and they resumed their journey. What the reason was I never knew and, as he didn't volunteer any explanation, we didn't ask for any.

At another time we were wind-bound and found it impossible to get our boat around a sharp bend. So we went into camp. When there is a very strong wind blowing against the current, it is sometimes impossible to float downstream, as the surface of the water actually flows uphill. The worst places are around the ends of points, where the waves race up like a rapid.

It was on the upstream side of one of these places that we were camped, when we saw a long bateau or poling boat going down the river. They evidently had a 'current sail' out, as they were making good progress against the wind. A current sail is made by dropping a piece of canvas under the boat with rocks tied to the two lower corners. The under-current, catching this, will carry the boat against any wind there may be. The riffle off this point was the worst I ever saw. It was not like an ocean roller. The waves stood up almost perpendicular, from bank to bank, to a height of about

five or six feet, and extended in tier after tier for a mile.

The men in the poling boat either did not comprehend their danger or couldn't pull the current sail up. They drove into this seething mass and we never saw them or their boat again. The boat was probably heavily loaded with their outfits and sank, and the cold water and waves did for the men. I never learned whose outfit this was.

We reached the Indian village of Kaltag one fine evening. The river was perfectly glassy, and the village, the mountains, the sky, and the Indians were all duplicated in the water. It was the salmon season and a good many of the Indians were out fishing in their little birch-bark canoes. Kaltag is at the point where the overland trail from Norton Bay joins the Yukon. It was over this trail that the diphtheria serum was rushed to Nome in 1924.

Here one of the Indians hitched his canoe to our boat and drifted down the river with us for several miles. He wanted to trade a salmon for some tobacco, but as we had none we compromised on an old gunny sack, which he shredded up and stuffed into his little pipe and smoked. We tried this ourselves, and found it an improvement on tea-leaves.

Not far below Kaltag we passed the Russian mission. Just above this is the largest eddy I ever saw on the Yukon. The eddy is made by the current sweeping around a high, dark cliff that extends out into the river. The only thing we noticed was a thin

parting of the water down the middle of the stream. Just as we reached this section two men called to us from across the eddy to come and camp with them, and, thinking they might be acquaintances of ours, we started across.

We had our sail up, as there was one of the rare breezes blowing. The minute our boat stuck its nose into the eddy, it turned completely around, pumping the wind out of the sail, and we started upstream at the same rate we had gone down, until we were again dumped into the downstream current. We tried this twice, each time farther downstream and with the same result, and we were not able to reach the men till we got to the extreme lower part of the eddy. The men were delighted, as they had been through the same performance a few hours before.

As we reached the lower river the character of the country changed completely. At Andreovsky the Yukon is said to be quite deep and six miles wide, and the current runs at six miles an hour between banks clear of islands. Below this the country flattens out, and the river is again cut up by multitudes of islands. These are covered with a growth of cottonwood and willow, and the banks are river silt instead of the gravel and rock that prevail above.

The river is affected by the tide to a distance of only twenty-odd miles from the sea. At the mouth the tide runs only about a foot to eighteen inches. The delta of the river is very wide and there are innumerable channels. A kind of mud flat, exposed at

low water, extends for a great many miles into Behring Sea. Boats going through the delta have to be careful to take the right channel. It is very easy to get lost. I have heard that the flats extend out as far as a hundred miles.

When we came out of the mouth of the river we saw a steamboat about two miles out, evidently stuck in the mud, so we started to sail out to it, to beg, borrow, or steal some tobacco. There was a little breeze. I was steering and my partner was asleep. The sail was pulling and I thought everything was all right, when looking over into the muddy water I saw a chip draw alongside of us and go ahead. Jumping to my feet and sounding with an oar I found we were off the channel and were hard and fast on a mud bank.

I pulled my partner out of our small cabin by one leg, much to his disgust, and we both stood in the water up to our ankles, swearing at each other. Then we each took an oar and went prospecting around for a channel, and as luck would have it we soon found it. By lightening the boat of the dogs we were able to push her over into it.

When we arrived at the steamer and went on board with the inevitable question, 'Have you got any tobacco?' we were met by a burst of laughter and jeers, and were informed that in the three days that the boat had been stuck there literally hundreds of men had stopped with the same inquiry. Just at this time the chief engineer came up on deck

and pulled out a small plug of tobacco. It was all he had, but he cut it in two and gave us half. I hope I meet this man again.

There is a story told of a prospector coming down here alone who took the wrong channel. As the current was very slack, he went to sleep on board his boat. When he woke up there was no water in sight — nothing but mud flats in every direction as far as the eye could reach. As there was nothing to do about it except to wait till the tide came in, he went to sleep. When he waked, instead of seeing no water in sight he could see no land. But he was able to set a compass course and get back up the river to another channel. A river steamer, which once tried to take a short cut, was lost for two weeks there.

By hugging the right bank we struck the Aphoon Channel, which leads eventually into the strip of water between the island of St. Michael and the mainland, and is called the canal. This stretch of water is very crooked and narrows in some places to a width of twenty-five feet. The depth is ample.

In one place it splits. While we were hesitating which channel to take, an omyak, a big skin boat loaded with Eskimos and dogs, came down one of the channels. We asked them the way to St. Michael, and a squaw, the only one of the party who seemed able to speak English, said, with a sweep of her arm toward one channel, 'Plenty water, no good.' Then, with a backward motion toward the channel she had just come down, she

said, 'Good,' which meant that the first channel went far out of our way. This is a good example of an Eskimo's idea of English. When we got down to Norton Sound and St. Michael, the water, which so far had been the muddy brown of the Yukon, turned the deep blue of the open sea.

On the way down the Yukon we had expected to be held up at Eagle Creek, the customs house, the first American town over the border. We didn't have much to pay duty on, but we hadn't much money to pay it with. As this was a new innovation since 1898, when law and order came into the country, we were not at all in favor of it. So we slid past Eagle Creek, were not molested, and congratulated ourselves on our good luck.

There was a scow with three men on board which kept in touch with us all the way down. These men were extremely nice, and we went along together, sometimes drifting with our boats tied together for a day or so and playing the rough tricks of the country on each other. But we left them at the mouth of the river, as we had a sail and they had none, and we arrived at the town of St. Michael several hours ahead of them. Here we were promptly held up by the customs house. This was after we thought we were absolutely safe.

Of course we swore we had come from the American side of the border, and of course they knew we hadn't. Naturally they had the best of it, but I was pretty nearly busted, and as a last resort to try to

get the inspector to make his charges as light as possible, I tried the game that I had found successful on the Canadian side the year before. I remarked that I didn't care for a receipt. This allowed him to put the money in his own pocket without saying anything about it. He laughed, and charged me only a nominal sum.

At that time two customs men patrolled the beach. When either man found a new boat, he scribbled on it in red chalk, 'Held for duty,' and marked under that some hieroglyphics, purporting to be his initials, to let the other inspector know that he had been there. Several hours after we arrived, the small scow came in with our three friends on board. When they had gone up to the trading post I decided to play a joke on them, and in fun wrote on their boat with a piece of red chalk that the inspectors had dropped.

When the men came back they caught on to the fact that I had done the trick, but they didn't have the least idea that there were any inspectors there. Without my knowing it they had made arrangements with a small steamer going over to Nome to tow them over. The two inspectors, however, nabbed them when they were halfway out to the steamer and brought them back, confiscating their whole boat.

As luck would have it I saw them brought back and realized that my joke had gone wrong. There was nothing for me to do but go up and explain to

the inspectors exactly what part I had taken in it. The inspectors, being very decent chaps, after giving me the devil for monkeying with Uncle Sam and threatening to confiscate my boat in place of theirs, let us all off on the payment of duty. This almost broke me of playing practical jokes.

A company of United States soldiers was situated here under a lieutenant. The men had nothing to do, not even drill or guard duty, and were under no discipline, so they spent most of their time in stealing from the commissary department and selling the things to us down-river men. I didn't blame them, as we benefited. This may not seem morally right, but when a man is hard up for grub he will overlook a whole lot.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BEACH DIGGINGS

SEVERAL boatloads were waiting at St. Michael till they could find a good way of getting to Nome. Most of the boats were rowboats and it was impossible to row them the eighty miles across. So some of those waiting decided to be towed over by steamer and some to go around by the shore. Our boat had a sail on it, so we decided to cross the bay, thinking in the innocence of our hearts that we knew something about sailing.

One fine day, with our deckload of dogs, we struck out boldly in the direction they told us we ought to go. When we got away from shore we discovered that our land compass would not stay still long enough for us to keep our direction, but since it was daylight all the time and the weather was very calm we struck the shore about sixty miles below Nome, at Golovin Bay. Midway down this bay there is a town called Cheenik, and here my partner and I divided our outfit and split up, as each one wanted to prospect in a different section of the country. I kept the boat and the dogs, and cruised around the bay for the greater part of a month.

Golovin Bay is divided into two parts. The inner bay is smaller, and here there was no fear of rough water. I lived all this time under an old omyak, or

skin boat, which when the wind blew could be canted either one way or the other. I had arranged this very conveniently and could tilt it either way while lying in my robe.

From Cheenik I decided to make an overland trip to the beach, the richest tidewater diggings ever discovered. The gold was very fine and found with the ruby sand on the beach. Holes were dug anywhere between high- and low-water mark, and the sand shoveled into rockers or 'cradles.' When the tide came in everything was smoothed off and when it went out digging was begun again. There were no claims staked out here. Everybody worked a hole as long as he could stay in it, and any one could take your hole the moment you left it, as tidewater belongs to no one. The whole beach was simply swarming with men, so thick they could hardly swing a shovel.

The United States law read in such a way that claims could be staked and held only to the edge of high water, which here was the beginning of a perpendicular muck-bank called 'the tundra.' The claims on the top of this tundra were all legally staked by other men, but that didn't prevent the beach-diggers from burrowing under it, as there was no authority to stop them. Excavating under the frozen tundra was done by thawing out the dirt with fires.

There were a few Indian igloos on top of the bank near the edge. There igloos are constructed by

partially digging into the earth, as in making a cellar, and building a roof above. One energetic miner burrowed so near the floor of one of these igloos that his smoke came up through the muck and suffocated an old sick Eskimo. The bottom of another igloo dropped into a tunnel.

Eventually a squad of soldiers from St. Michael was sent over to guard the mouths of the tunnels and to stop any new ones from being dug. But this didn't altogether stop the practice, as the soldiers worked in the tunnels themselves, lugging the dirt out and arranging with some one outside to pan it.

I was walking across the beach to Topkok one day, dressed in my dirty miner's garb, and saw two soldiers sitting on the bank. I nodded to them, and one of them rose and said to me, 'I know you. Where did you come from?' Thinking he meant what part of Alaska, I answered, 'From St. Michael.' 'I didn't mean that,' he said; 'where did you go to school?' and when I mentioned a military school in the West, he said, 'I thought so! Don't you remember Bob Offley?' He was the lieutenant in charge of the new troop that had just arrived at St. Michael.

Later in the season I decided to go on up to Nome, so with my dogs and another man I started sailing up the coast. Some little way above Golovin Bay a tall cliff rises directly from the ocean, so straight up and down that it is impossible even to get a handhold on it. The water is very deep at its base. This

cliff extends for about twenty miles along the coast, and every one that goes up the coast is glad when he has passed it.

We had gone only a few miles along it when the wind gave out, and as our boat was too heavy and too big to row, we lay there under the cliff in the perfectly smooth water. We were there for a long time, and we had nothing to drink. This was the first time I ever really suffered from thirst. Meanwhile a lot of rowboats passed us, working their way up to Nome. They were all heavily loaded and made their way slowly along the bluff, but they gave us the horse-laugh at not being able to move at all.

When the wind did spring up, it came with a vengeance, and we ploughed up the coast, overtaking the rowboats. But the wind blew so hard that we had to run up the Solomon River, where we safely anchored our boat away from the storm. Later we heard that fourteen corpses were washed ashore in that gale.

We lay there till the wind abated, when we finally made another start, but were again driven in by the heavy weather. So we left our boat and went the rest of the distance on foot. I figured that the boat would come up the coast in time, as I knew some one would steal it and probably go to Nome with it. This actually happened, and, when the boat did arrive, of course I promptly claimed it, and then sold it to the man who had brought it up.

It was while walking up the beach on the way to

Nome that I found a diary lying on the sand. There was no name in it. It had been kept all the way in over White Pass and down the river to Nome, giving all the usual mishaps that were familiar to us all. When the owner arrived in Nome, it opened on a full page, across which was written in large letters, 'DRUNK.' Here the diary stopped.

The beach mines at Nome had been almost worked out, but the town was in full swing and was a full-fledged mining camp, with saloons, dance-halls, and gambling-halls going night and day. Steamers were arriving and cargoes were being put ashore in lighters, as Nome is on an open roadstead. This town, however, never compared in my estimation with Dawson in its palmy days. There was more of the rough element here, as the town was easier to get into. All that people had to do was to get into a steamer at Seattle and step off at Nome, while the long overland trip kept some of the undesirables out of Dawson. Also Nome was under United States law and didn't have the protection that was provided under the Canadian Government and the Mounted Police.

At this time there was a rush at Nome to get house lots. Men could stake these at any spot that had not been previously staked, or they could buy other men off. Of course the center of the city was occupied by the big companies, and the nearer a man could stake to the center the more his house lot was worth. But he had to hold it down himself

until the recording could be legally done. This caused a good many fights, some of the rough element making a business of driving men off their lots, seizing the lots themselves, and reselling them.

One young man had staked a desirable lot near the center of the town and put up his tent on it, not daring to leave it. A gun-man came along, evicted him at the point of his six-shooter, and threw his tent and belongings off the lot, putting his own there instead. The young man was unarmed at the time, but he borrowed a small thirty-two revolver and came back, took the bad-man by surprise, and shot him through the breast, though without knocking him off his feet. The wounded man immediately replied with his forty-five Colt, shooting the young man in almost identically the same place and knocking him down. Then walking over to him he shot him again, this time through the head. The bad-man didn't die for several days.

This was a good demonstration of the advantage of a large caliber revolver over a small one. It was claimed that the gun-man was employed by one of the large companies to get lots for them. At any rate, they took care of him till he died.

Robbery of every description was in full swing at Nome, from the highest officials down to the lowest scum. A good description of the condition of the town at this time is given by Rex Beach in his article called 'The Looting of Alaska.' The men down here seemed to be more quarrelsome than they were in

Dawson, in fact almost as bad as they were in Skagway, and robbery and stealing were so prevalent that nothing was safe. At one time it was proved here that all the sheriffs and deputy sheriffs had done time in the penitentiary. One of them made his living by robbing the drunks he arrested.

One day two men and I were given a dose of knock-out drops. The three of us had been doped together, and, as we had had a drink in three different saloons, it was impossible to tell which one had done the trick. Two of us were already busted and lost nothing, but the other man was robbed of six hundred dollars.

An incident happened about this time which was rather refreshing in the midst of the general sordidness of the place. I was living with two men at the time. One was Captain Major, once captain of a sealer, of whom I have already spoken; the other was Jack Dustin, who had been his mate.

Jack Dustin was a man who could not stand opposition from big men or men as good as himself, and as he was a natural born fighter he was always picking quarrels. But he would take any amount of back talk from small men. He was almost a non-drinker, and not a gad-about in any way.

At this time a hold-up man was making himself conspicuous in town by sticking a gun under men's noses at unexpected times and robbing them. After this thug had held up quite a number of people, Jack Dustin began to go out at night, and Captain

Major, who had been Jack's captain for a good many years, said, 'I wonder what Jack's got up his sleeve now?' little knowing how near he came to the truth.

Two or three days later Jack came back to the house comparatively early one night, with a rather satisfied look on his face, as if he had done a good Christian act. Next day we found out that he had been on the lookout for the thug and had carried his sheath-knife up his coat-sleeve.

When the gun-man had gone through the performance of sticking his gun under Jack's nose, telling him to throw up his hands, his hand certainly went up, but on the way he cut the cords on the gun-man's wrist, causing him to drop his gun. Then he slashed him down both sides of his cheeks, marking him for life, collared him, and took him to the jail, where he gave him a kick and turned him loose. I don't think Jack did this from philanthropic motives. He simply couldn't stand having a better man than himself around.

We had a tremendous storm this summer that took about three feet of sand off the beach and created tremendous havoc among the shipping. A large number of houses were washed into the ocean. Later in the fall we had another one which threw the three feet of sand back again onto the beach. The second storm was the more spectacular sight of the two, as it began after dark and raged all night. However, it did not do as much damage as the first.

I went out prospecting with my partner later in

the season in what was called the Blue Stone country at Grantley Harbor. Here we spent a month putting down a bed-rock drain near a brook, to open up a claim. One day a cloudburst struck us and we were obliged to move our tent onto higher ground. This required only two trips of about fifty yards each, but the last trip was made breast-deep through a raging torrent. I never saw it rain harder. As the ground was frozen, and there was no timber to obstruct the water, the brook came up in a moment and every little draw was a seething mass of water. Next morning the water had all gone down to its former level, but our month's work was completely obliterated. We couldn't even tell where we had been working.

Since it was too late in the fall to begin over again, we took passage back to Nome in a schooner. I had four dogs with me that I used for packing, and not having any chains I took the thole pins out of a large dory that we had on deck, to make toggles with. When we got near Nome a gale began to rise, and the wind blew so hard that the schooner had to be brought up into the wind and the dory launched. The captain put us all into it, with one of his sailors, keeping only two men to help him sail the schooner.

We pushed off as quickly as possible, and the captain threw us a bucket for bailing. Then, catching the wind, he sailed out to sea as fast as he could go. We had four oars, but when we came to look for the thole pins they were gone. Of course my guilty con-

science pricked me, but I thought it unnecessary to tell the other men about it. The only thing to do was to break bits off the bottom boards of the boat and try and make thole pins of these. These were of soft wood, so it was impossible to put our weight onto the oars. We were three miles from shore in a tremendous sea, and perpetual bailing was necessary.

All went comparatively well until we got in where some lighters were anchored, when we were kept busy trying to keep out of the way of the hawsers of the lighters, which kept ripping out of the water like great knives. We eventually wound up on the shore, which we struck side-on, as most of the thole pins had broken by this time and the boat was unmanageable. Here we were capsized, but nobody was the worse. The schooner was called the Rubel Richardson, and she was wrecked on the next trip down.

As cold weather came on at Nome and the last boat left for the States, things began to settle down for the winter. The ice began to jam in and freeze farther and farther out, and the whole population devoted itself to catching tom-cod. These are small cod, and our method was to catch them through holes in the ice. We took three large hooks and filed their barbs off. These were then put with their backs together and soldered with melted lead, making a gang hook. Just a little way above the joint a piece of bright worsted was wrapped around the shank. This was the only paraphernalia we had.

All we had to do was to drop the hook down a hole and bring up a tom-cod.

I managed to get a sod cabin this fall, on the edge of the tundra. I don't know who built this cabin, but whoever did was rather ingenious. He put up a ten by twelve tent on a frame, covered it with boards, and covered this again with sod. Outside it was quite a sizable house with high walls, five or six feet thick. If it had been built in warm weather and allowed to settle together, it would have been all right, but it had frozen up before it had had time to settle and it was about the coldest place I ever lived in.

Things went rather hard with me this winter; in fact they did for everybody in town, as money was scarce. It was claimed that there were five thousand busted men without employment in Nome alone. Since the mines were summer diggings there was practically nothing for them to do. Quite a large proportion were professional men. Also there were men among them who had money on the 'outside,' but couldn't get hold of it. Others had expected to go out on the last boat, but for one reason or another had got caught in the country.

A man was lucky to have a house of any kind to live in. I knew one man who made a house out of two piano boxes covered with sod. The saloons and gambling-halls used to close comparatively early, so that men could sleep in them. The destitution, in fact, was far worse than in Dawson after the fire.

I myself twice got down to my last pot of beans and had no money to buy more, but each time a little job came up for my dogs, so that I was able to keep going. Strangely enough I found that the cheapest food for my dogs was fresh bread.

Whenever it was possible to rustle enough food, I would go off prospecting or tripping down the coast. This saved fuel, as there was plenty of that along the beaches the first part of the winter. As the winter wore on, the driftwood was covered by snow blown over from the tundra, so that you couldn't find fuel.

After that men traveling along the coast took the Eskimo graves that had tumbled down and burnt them for fuel. These Eskimo graves were built on four posts, high in the air, and on the top of these the dead Eskimo was placed in a kind of pole coffin. The Eskimos seemed to think their responsibility was over when they had taken care of their dead, so that when these caches tumbled down they were never put up again. Later still in the winter, when these fallen graves had been burnt up, it became our custom to chop down the standing ones ourselves. It was a case of either doing this or having no fire at all, and no fire meant no food.

When I was in the town of Nome, my life was like every one else's. There was no firewood to be had and we had to buy coal by the sack. When my money gave out, I had been trying to cook on my Primus stove with kerosene. No heat radiated from

this, so I rigged up my tent over my lower bunk, and slept in it as you would in a sleeping-car. This was fairly comfortable when you kept covered up in your robe. When I couldn't stand the inaction any longer, I went down to the saloons and spent all the time possible there.

It was at this time that the tom-cod came in and helped us out, but when a blizzard was raging it was impossible to go out and catch them, so men went hungry. I remember finding one morning that I had neglected to get a large enough supply of the fish, and had to go out before breakfast on the ice in a storm and catch some.

The trips that I got in with my dogs just about paid expenses while they lasted, and most of them were only for a few days. But I was much farther ahead than the poor chaps who had no dogs and had no way of making any money whatever. The town took care of a great many of these people and gave them shoveling to do, but the saloon-men and gamblers were the foremost in all charity work. There was a saying in this country, 'If you ever want charity, ask it from the gamblers and the demi-monde.'

When the winter was about half over, I had a call from a man who was commissioner at Point Blossom, north of Kotzebue Sound. He wanted to go over there prospecting, taking enough food to last till the middle of summer, when the boats would be coming in. I didn't know this particular trip, and

the three other drivers he engaged had never driven dogs until this winter and didn't know much about rough work. My team was composed of six dogs in the old-fashioned Yukon hitch, tandem, with two sleds and a gee-pole. The other three teams used the old type of Alaskan basket sled, which is rather like the modern type used for traveling up there now, only longer. These latter sleds were twelve feet long and twenty-two inches wide.

A blizzard came up the day before we were supposed to start which delayed us for three days, and during this time one of my dogs developed madness. He was the best dog I had. Rather than kill him, I decided to save him as long as I could, as he was a splendid worker. Being more or less used to this disease and having been bitten several times before, I was not afraid of it myself. But other dogs on a team are terrified of the madness. I let him sleep in the cabin with me.

There was an epidemic of this disease going through town at this time and exterminating the dogs. Seven years before, the same thing happened on the Yukon. It begins with a peculiar look in the dog's eyes. Then he gets restless, and makes swift, unexpected attacks on other dogs. As the disease develops, day after day, these flurries become more frequent and violent, until the dog will attack anything, even inanimate objects, with the greatest fury. I have seen a dog tear a two-inch plank door to pieces. Their strength at these times is incredible.

Between flurries it is possible to handle them, if a man is very slow in his motions. Also if the dog strikes at you, you must not pull away. A quick movement of any kind seems to throw him into paroxysms of attack. The dogs have a strange power, when in this state, of being able to look a man down, which no sane animal can do. They are also absolutely insensible to pain, and very cunning. They never rest from the time they are first attacked till they die, and I have never known a dog to survive.

This dog of mine started in by attacking several men in town before we got away, biting one man's thumb almost off through his mitten. Striking an Indian at the hip he almost took his breeches off; these I had to pay for with a plug of tobacco. He got me three times, but it was my own fault. He bit me in the arm when I made a quick motion, and again in the face. The third time I fell by the side of the sled and he struck me in the leg. I have the scar of this bite to-day. I could handle him, get his harness off, and chain him up, if I watched my chance and didn't jump if he grabbed me with his teeth. I watered him out of a bottle, by sitting astride him, holding his head, and letting the water run down his throat. All this had to be done with extreme care.

When we started out I muzzled him with a strap around his nose, so that he couldn't bite the other dogs, and I worked him next to the sled. I have

never known a dog to work so hard without apparent fatigue as this dog did when in this state. When the sled ran downhill he rushed ahead, pulled the whole load himself, and piled onto the other dogs before they could get out of his way.

The muzzle he wore kept him from biting them, but he discovered he could get the end of a dog's tail in his mouth, and hang onto it. After a while he contented himself with this, and as the dogs were deadly afraid of him, I certainly had a free-working team. After the third day the paroxysms came on so frequently that I had to kill him, and my popularity both with dogs and men began to revive.

Every known remedy had been tried for this disease without any effect, and it was the custom to kill the dogs as soon as the disease declared itself. I have known a great many men who have been bitten by dogs in this condition, but I have never known a case where they had bad effects from it, aside from laceration. One man, it was claimed, did get hydrophobia, but, when the story was traced down, it was found that he had been so frightened that he drank himself into delirium tremens. Of course the men who were not dog-men were afraid of it, but men who had passed through the ordeal got so indifferent they didn't mind it.

On this trip, after leaving Nome, we went down the coast to Norton Bay, stopping at way-houses on the trail. The commissioner was taking an old man, a clerk, with him. The first night out this chap sat

down on the deacon seat, holding his head in his hands, waiting for supper. I thought he was tired and didn't pay any attention to him till supper was called. Then I gave him a hard push, when he flopped over on the floor in a dead faint. Everybody thought he was dead. We got him undressed and into his bunk. Not knowing what to do we poured whiskey down his throat, put cold water on his head and hot water on his feet, and got him around so that he was breathing naturally. The next morning he was all right and traveled the rest of the trip without a repetition of the attack.

He said he had never had anything like it before, and I hope he never had another. We were all afraid it might happen again, in some place where we couldn't take care of him. Being something of a dry joker, whenever we did get into a bad place, and there were plenty of them, he would scare the life out of us by acting queer. He had called 'Wolf' so often that I think we should have left him if a second attack had come on.

A few hours after the last bite from my sick dog, I arrived at the way-house of Topkok. The wife of the way-house keeper was very much concerned over the wound and wanted me to have it cauterized. I refused to do this, as I didn't want to make a bad matter worse. Several weeks afterwards, on my return trip, I again arrived at this way-house and the woman rushed up to me and asked if I had felt any ill effects from the bite. I told her No, but that the

other men had complained that I growled a good deal in my sleep. I never saw a woman jump so quick or so far in my life. She wouldn't come near me until I gave her my solemn word that I was joshing.

From Topkok we drove over the mountains to Cheenik on Golovin Bay. Here we were detained a couple of days on account of blizzards. When the storm abated we pulled out again, hoping to make the divide, but at the foot of the range we were again overtaken by a storm which compelled us to seek quarters in a camp where three other men were living. It was pretty crowded, but hospitality was always in fashion in this country and we lay there for two more days. One of the men in the cabin was a negro who was so badly afflicted with inflammatory rheumatism that he couldn't get out of his bunk. He was being nursed by a New York club-man.

The only thing of consequence that I remember of our forced stay with these men was that one of them and one of our men started a discussion about the fourth dimension. One of the crew who was cooking got so interested in what was going on that he forgot that the lid of the pepper-pot was off, and emptied the whole contents into the mess of beans, with the remark, 'If you fellows would stop talking about this fourth other damn thing, I might be able to do the cooking.' Even the poor negro had to laugh at this.

Pulling over the divide next day was hard work with our heavy loads. The wind struck us again

and I had to drop one of my sleds and make a trip back for it. I had hard work to find it in the blinding snow. After this, before hitting Norton Bay, we struck a little timber, where there was a way-house kept by a friend of mine from the Yukon.

From that point we took to the ice and followed an old frozen trail or track. Water had settled on top of the ice, and to keep the frozen trail without sliding off was quite a trick. I had no trouble, as I had my gee-pole, but the other men's sleds kept slipping off into the slush. As salt water is very sticky and the weather was cold, the runners had to be cleared of ice each time that this happened. After the men had made themselves gee-poles, they had no more difficulty.

At the end of the bay we stopped in a cabin with some other men, and from there we pulled out next day, making our way up the Koyuk River. There we left the last vestiges of civilization, and made our way across the bleak and barren tundra.

About this time I became so sick of breaking trail for the other teams that I decided to have a series of accidents, let them break trail and get ahead of me and do the work of making camp that night. My plan worked all right until the weather turned into another blow, when I was far in the rear. Being afraid of losing the trail I made all speed to catch up with them. The trail was practically gone and I had hard work to keep my direction: my chickens were coming home to roost. Coming in through a little

swamp, with a small lake in the middle, I discovered the men trying to put up their tent on the ice of this pond in a heavy wind. The pond was blown clear of snow and they were having a hard siege. Being Cheechakos, they had never run into conditions like this before.

That night we had an uncomfortable time, as the ice was hard to lie on. Next day we struck the Buckland River which was almost clear of snow. The going was good here, with timber on both banks. We slept that night at a cabin that a half-breed had built in there. There was plenty of fuel and boughs to sleep on, and after so many days' sleeping out it seemed to me the coziest place I had ever seen.

At the mouth of Eschscholtz Bay we found an Eskimo and his family, wintering in their igloo. From there we crossed over to Elephant Point, where three of us were again overtaken by a blizzard, which blew so hard that we couldn't even get our tent up. We lay for three days in the snow, covered up in our robes, and lived on raw bacon and hard-tack.

It was impossible to feed the dogs properly. All we could do was to throw them pieces of bacon and hope that the right ones would get it. It was impossible to tell day from night, as the raging blizzard made even the lightest part of the day seem dark. We came through all right, but each man owned up that he thought the other men had left him when he was asleep. It is funny how these thoughts will creep in on you.

CHAPTER XIV

SNOW-FIELDS AND ICE-FLOES

It was decided here that I should go back to Nome and try to pick up some food for the commissioner. He gave me a letter to a friend of his, hoping that the friend would put up enough money for more food. This hope never materialized, as the friend was busted when I got back. So I didn't make the trip out again.

The journey back alone was all right until I left the Buckland River, struck the tundra, and left behind me what little timber there was. Then I had to travel for thirty-five miles before I struck a landmark. I was very anxious to follow my old trail back because it was an easy country to get lost in, and I had taken only just enough food to go from camp to camp.

When I was ready to put out from the Buckland, the wind was blowing hard at my back and increasing every minute, but I simply couldn't wait till it blew over, as it might last three or four days and I didn't have enough food for any delay. I had shot a couple of ptarmigan and that helped me out. The wind being dead at my back also made it easier.

By the time I started out from the river the wind had already nearly obliterated the trail, but it could still just be seen as a slight depression in the snow.

The gale had blown the snow off the crust, and the whole tundra looked like acres of big flat mushrooms, each one on its own spindle. These were soon whipped off, and the broken crust, in pieces a foot or so in diameter, was driven headlong. When these pieces of ice struck the dogs they flinched. I felt them myself even through the clothing on my own legs.

The tundra was soon completely cleared of snow, leaving the muskeg exposed underneath. But the trail that had been pounded down on our way over remained like a white ribbon on the bare ground. The wind kept increasing until I couldn't even see the dogs for the whirling snow. I saw nothing but the trail, showing up perpetually between the handlebars of the sled. The wind blew with such force from the rear that I had to step on the brake to keep the sled from overriding the team.

All went well until I came to a dry watercourse, which was filled up with snow as hard as marble. The trail absolutely disappeared here, as if it had dived under a lake of ice. I was very much afraid that my leader, Ribbon, although I had tremendous faith in him, would not be able to pick up the trail on the other side, in which case we should be completely lost and all we could do would be to drift before the wind. Tipping my sled over so that the dogs couldn't start, I crawled out on my hands and knees to see if I could get somewhere and find the trail, hanging onto my lash-line so that I could get

back to the sled. But the line was only fifty or sixty feet long and this only wasted time.

I determined then to go ahead, dogs, sled, and all, keeping myself tied to the outfit by the regular safety-rope that all dog-drivers used. This safety-rope was about five or six feet long and was tied to the handle-bars and from there to the wrist or waist. It was carried in case a man stumbled or lost hold on his handle-bars, so that he would not be deserted by his team, as it was often impossible to make the dogs hear in the wind. No one can walk upright in these blizzards. If a man stranded, he had to creep along on his hands and knees, and without a team, it would only be a short time before he perished. With a safety-rope, however, he merely was dragged for a few feet until the team stopped, when he could again regain the handle-bars.

The gullies, which had been filled with hard snow since I last went over them, presented a problem that I hadn't reckoned on. After my first attempt to find the trail myself, I turned everything over to Ribbon, and within a hundred yards he picked up the trail again. These gullies kept recurring all day long, and were from a hundred feet to half a mile in width, but this dog never made a mistake and always picked up the trail on the other side.

When our heavily loaded teams had come over on the way out, they had not crossed directly, but had gone either up or down, so as to find an easy way up the bank. Since that time from ten to fifty feet of

snow had been blown into these gullies, so it was utterly impossible for Ribbon to smell the trail. If you ask me how he did it, I simply don't know, but he struck the trail squarely every single time, and never had to find it from the side. The next thing I knew we came to the Koyuk River, where I camped for the night.

This leader of mine was the first dog I had bought on the Yukon. He had come up from Norton Sound on the steamboat, a little while before, so this type of country was really like home to him. He was a large black Malamute, of the old-fashioned type, and I had used him more as a leader than any other one dog. He had never gone back on me in any way.

I lost him the next summer, when he was taken with madness over on the Inmachuk, and I buried him over there with his harness on. There was an old tradition up there that a dog who is buried with his harness on will work for his master in the happy hunting grounds. I think I have a full team waiting for me. But trouble will certainly be brewing, for they were all leaders.

The next day's trip took me down to Norton Bay and the beginning of civilization. Nothing of any interest happened till I got to Cheenik, where I picked up two old friends from the Yukon who were traveling with a team apiece. That evening at Cheenik we met a little Frenchman, by profession a cook, who for some reason or other took a fancy to

me and persisted in treating me to a drink called 'coffee royal.' I drank it, but for the life of me I couldn't see why coffee had to be spoilt with brandy, or brandy spoilt with coffee. Still I took it and told him I liked it.

The two men from the Yukon and I decided next day to take the route I had sailed over the previous summer, leading around the foot of the high cliffs between Cheenik and Bluff, instead of going over the mountains, which is a longer journey. This lower route is the easier, but the ice had a habit of breaking loose from the foot of the cliffs and suddenly going out to sea without warning. When we were about halfway around the wind sprang into another gale.

Travel on the ice here is about the most dangerous thing in this part of Alaska. The ice freezes out only eight to ten miles from shore, beyond which there is open water, with nothing but drift ice. A storm outside will gradually raise the shore ice and break it loose. The ice does not break off along the shallow beaches, but at the cliffs, where the water is deep. Once the ice is broken loose, the whole mass drifts away and is sometimes carried two or three hundred miles out to sea. At other times a changing wind may bring it back to shore very quickly.

Dexter, an old-timer, had been carried out at this place some years before. Paralysis developed after the exposure, and he was obliged to walk on crutches for the rest of his life. Another time three men and

two women were going up the coast on the ice along these cliffs when it broke loose at one end. By the time they were opposite the road-house at the end of the cliffs, the ice had parted there also, and it was impossible to get ashore. They hailed the road-house keeper, who launched a small boat and rowed out to them, but the boat had not been used since the fall and was leaky. It began to fill with water, so that when he struck the slush ice he was unable to force his way through it to the main floe. In attempting to jump across the gap he fell short into the suds, and this salt slush is so sticky, that, in spite of thoroughly scraping him, the only way they could keep him from freezing was to put him between the two women and throw the robes over them. The two men kept alive by traveling round and round the sleds. They eventually were blown ashore again and reached Nome, but they were out over forty-eight hours.

I heard of a party of Eskimos who were marooned for three weeks and supported themselves by killing seals who came onto the floe. These Eskimos were blown several hundred miles out of their way. The country is full of tales of men lost on this floe.

The wind kept steadily increasing as we made our way along, and seemed to blow in every direction at once as it rebounded from the cliffs, so traveling was very disagreeable. We were driving very close together, mine being the last team, when the man just ahead of me, whom I could barely see in the whirling

snow, turned round and pointed to something in the snow beside the trail. I had to pull back my parka hood to see it, and when I did so I saw something black, wallowing around in the snow, about six feet away from me. Letting myself out to the full extent of my safety-rope, I grabbed at the black thing and it turned out to be the unfortunate French cook of the night before.

He had started out to walk to Topkok, long before we left. When caught in the wind he was unable to walk and was blown off the trail. I pulled him onto my sled and covered him up with my robe. He was so confused and exhausted that he didn't know what he was doing.

Our caravan started off again after this, but when we got to Topkok the road-house was nowhere in sight. It was dark by this time, and the whole aspect of the country had been changed by the drifting snow. What few houses there were had completely disappeared from sight, as they had been built at the foot of the tundra slope and the snow had covered them up.

This drifting snow had done queer things. At one cabin the snow was level with the ridgepole, but there was a semi-circular hole at the back of the cabin, which was evidently caused by the back-lash of the wind. In driving around the edge of this in the darkness I had the misfortune to get too near, and the sled, the cook, myself, and most of the dogs dropped down into it. By working the sled up onto

the edge of this pit we managed to crawl out and resume our way.

We soon caught up with the other teams which were standing in conference on top of the way-house. We knew it was the way-house because we recognized the long piece of hydraulic pipe running twenty or thirty feet into the air, which they used for a stovepipe. Smoke was belching out above our heads, but how the devil to get into the house we didn't know. So we skirmished around on the beach side and eventually found the entrance, about two hundred feet down from the house. A tunnel had been dug into the hard snow. This tunnel had been gradually made longer and longer as the wind drifted in more snow. It was beautifully cut, and looked like the purest white marble.

Inside the way-house the owner was as comfortable as a man could ask to be, and he had hollowed out caves in the snow outside for the dogs. Two men who were living in a tent about twenty feet from the main house were also completely buried, and a tunnel had been cut in to them. But they were afterwards buried alive.

I spent the rest of the winter making short trips to the outlying country. While on one of these my partner Fred Fay, another man, and I camped near three men for some time. We started playing poker, but having no chips we played for beans. The first night nobody won or lost very much and nothing happened. The second night our guests made a kill-

ing and took with them the beans they had won. As they had a run of luck, it wasn't long before they had taken most of our stock.

When we got down toward bed-rock we wanted to buy the beans back, but they would neither sell, lend, nor give us a single bean, and they kept such a good guard over them that we couldn't even steal any. They lugged them back and forth to work with them every day. As we got down to our last beans it was the most exciting poker game that I ever sat in. Finally we were compelled to make a day's trip back to Nome for more rations, and they thought this was funny!

On our way back with the beans, of which we had a full supply this time, we came down a ravine long after dark, and saw a meteor which seemed to follow the rim of the creek as it went down abruptly into Nome River. This meteor was tremendously bright and must have been very near the earth, as it made a hissing sound loud enough to startle the dogs and make them crouch.

Arriving at the camp, of course we could talk of nothing but this, much to the amusement of the other men who made a few remarks about the hooch getting strong at Nome. For a few days we had nothing but the meteor poked at us: anything that couldn't be accounted for of course was a meteor. Being wealthy again we started playing poker, and naturally having plenty of beans our luck changed and we won them all back.

When we finally got back to Nome, my sod house was the first one we came to. We decided to cook our supper there before the other men went to their respective homes. As we drew near, we noticed that the tent, through which we had to enter, was split from top to bottom. As stealing was very prevalent, every man reached for his gun, whether it was rifle, six-shooter, or shotgun.

Spreading out we surrounded the house. Entering it, we found no one, but everything had been turned upside down by the thief, who was out for valuables, of which of course there were none, with the exception of my gold watch which I had left in my war-sack among my old clothing. He had gone through everything, but missed the watch, which was tangled up in an old shirt. I think the man must have been at work when we got there, and that the noise of our dog-teams scared him off, as a friend of ours had passed the tent about half an hour before we came in, and it wasn't slit when he went by. I pity the thief if he had been caught in there.

CHAPTER XV

CAMPING ON THE CIRCLE

THE next spring, that is in April, 1901, I met a man who shared the desire I had always had of going prospecting in the region bordering on the Arctic Circle. The part we wanted to explore lay just south of the Circle and near the east end of Kotzebue Sound. This country was just being explored. A few prospectors had run over it the summer before. It was a timberless, rolling tundra, and a terrible place for blizzards.

We started and were gradually feeling our way along, not knowing exactly where we wanted to go, or where we should be, once we got there. The sledding was fairly good for the first hundred and fifty miles from Nome, but from there on we had a good deal of difficulty in crossing the rivers, which are small and troublesome in this section. Being practically busted, we had only a small outfit of two dogs apiece.

We lived as we could, getting a good many ducks and geese, which had just begun to come in, so as to save our provisions. Our general route led us at last to the headwaters of the Inmachuk Creek. Following this down we came to a natural hot spring, and, as the snow was giving out and the sledding had broken up, we decided to make it our headquarters. Here I remained for a year.

My partner decided he didn't care to stay in the country and went down to Kotzebue Sound to take his chance of catching a sailing vessel, and to this day I don't know what became of him. He left the balance of the provisions with me, but took the tent and stove with him.

Another man who had landed about five miles down the creek had also lost his partner, but the partner had left him the tent and stove and taken most of the provisions. I had noticed this tent from one of the hills, and decided that I would go and see what I could do for a shelter. This man and I finally decided to go into partnership, and we spent the rest of the summer prospecting.

His name was Seagrave and he was the strangest man I ever knew. He was of ordinary height, but of great muscular development and tremendous activity, and about forty years of age. He had left England as a boy, after having been implicated in some serious poaching affair. He had had a fair education and had been trained in a choir of the Church of England. He had quite a fine voice, knew all the chants and hymns, and was very fond of singing them, mixed up with all the tunes picked up in various parts of North America. He had come out to Canada and had worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, but was caught selling liquor to the Indians and had to make a forced journey into the States.

Although he had always traded more or less in liquor, he had never tasted any himself. The reason

for this, he told me, was that his mother made him promise when he was a young man that he would never drink. When he got older and had become mixed up with the liquor trade, he took rather a pride in the fact that he never had drunk any.

Soon after coming into the States he got into trouble in connection with the Homestead strike. This seemed to have soured him, and he wandered from one mining camp in the west to another, always making trouble. At one time he was stevedore in Seattle, and from there he went to Washington with Coxey's army. His experiences on this trip alone would have made a considerable story.

After that he was involved in lower-grade politics, always making trouble for himself, as he was against anything that respectable citizens held to. He was very well posted on almost every subject, with a great gift of gab, and was convincing in his arguments. He had no respect whatsoever for God, man, or the devil, and called himself a 'philosophical anarchist.' He had finally drifted into Alaska. This was the man with whom I was in partnership for a year.

Some straggling prospectors now began to come into the country where we were camping. Grub was very scarce, and if it hadn't been for the ptarmigan we should soon have been starved out. The ducks and geese were almost unfit to eat, owing to their long flight and nesting. The latter part of the summer we found to our surprise that the small stream

we were camping on was a salmon stream. Seagrave found this out one morning when he went to get water for breakfast. He came running back to tell me that the stream was black with salmon. Not all streams in Alaska are salmon streams. As the adult salmon always come back to the streams where they were spawned, and die after spawning, they are only to be found at certain intervals.

We decided to catch and dry salmon to use for dog-food for the coming winter and to sell to prospectors, in case there should be a rush next year. But how in the world to get them? The pools were absolutely black, with the backs of the fish sticking out of the water, and more were crowding their way over the riffles every minute. As the stream didn't go much beyond our camp, it was a little congested.

At first we tried hitting them on the head with a club, but as it took three or four hard blows to kill a salmon and you never could hit the same one twice, it was slow work. Then we tried a trap made of willow, but could not make it strong enough to hold the fish.

After that we took our iron sled-shoes and by dint of heating and pounding made a couple of three-pronged spears. With these we were able to catch about two hundred and fifty a day. Most of the salmon weighed from ten to twenty pounds each. The few silver-sides that came up were much heavier.

We split the salmon in half, took the backbone out,

and hung them over willow racks to dry. A twenty-pound salmon will dry down to about three pounds or less, but what is left is very nourishing for man or beast. I speak at length about this salmon business, as it was to be our chief food next winter.

We took a side-trip to Kotzebue Sound one time, and spent several days on the beach. There I met a typical cockney. He was very hard to understand, and at first when he talked about the 'h'owls' on the tundra, I thought he was a bit loony and had been seeing things. He was the very last man I should have picked out as a hero. But one night in an Eskimo igloo he told me about the previous winter he had spent on the Chandalar River. The story ran something like this, although I shan't attempt to give it in his jargon.

'My partner and I went up the Chandalar for about two hundred miles. We took our provisions in a poling boat, and built a cabin, intending to spend the winter there and prospect. One night my partner was taken sick with a pain in his belly, and kept me awake all night. Then he got worse and in a few days he died.

'He was a very big man, and you know I'm small, and having no one to help me I didn't know what to do with him, as I had to stay there all winter. He was all doubled up in his bunk. I rolled him out, and dragged him outdoors, and then I didn't know what to do. But I knew I had to take him down the river in the spring to show I hadn't killed him. So I

straightened him out and let him freeze with his arms straight at his sides.

'Then I cut two long skids and laid the ends on the ground, and the other ends on the cabin roof, about four feet apart. Next I took the tow-rope off the boat and tied the middle onto the top of the roof, and taking the free ends brought them around my partner and back again to the roof. After this I climbed up myself and rolled him over up the poles as you would a log. It was hard work, as he was so big and his shoulders rolled faster than his legs. After tipping him off several times and having to begin all over again, I got him up all right and lashed him there for the winter. You see I couldn't leave him on the ground because the wolves would have eaten him up.

'Yes, of course, it was kind of spooky having him up there over my head all winter, and I was awfully afraid he would thaw out before the river did.

'Next spring my boat was in such bad condition that I couldn't use it. I made a raft and took him down to one of the missions. Yes, I was alone with him for about eight months.'

During the fall, when we were not drying salmon on the Inmachuk we took long trips for days at a time over the country. At one place we ran across a large goose-pasture on a low marshy plain, where the ground was covered with nesting geese as far as the eye could reach in all directions. It seemed to me that every six or eight feet we ran across a goose.

The goslings were just beginning to hatch out, so that we got no benefit from the eggs, and the old geese were so thin and tough that they were unfit to eat.

Later on in the year we killed these young geese with clubs, before they were able to fly. These were called at that time 'flappers.' Here was a whole winter's supply of food, but as we had no salt with us there was no way of preserving them.

Several days' travel east from our home camp we found a valley between high ridges, closely dotted with stone cairns, built like inverted shields, while in between were layer upon layer of caribou horns, I don't know how deep. This divide must have been at one time a pass for caribou or reindeer. Judging from the moss on the horns and on the rocks, the cairns must have been used, a great many years ago, as blinds by the Eskimo for killing the bands of caribou that must have migrated through this section.

I saw no part of the animals but the horns. The bones must have been taken away with the carcasses. This slaughter probably went on for years because the layer of horns was very deep. The migration of the animals must have been always from the same direction, as the cairns were all pointed one way.

About thirty-five miles from the coast we found a skeleton of what we presumed to be a white man. He had fallen forward with his arms outstretched, and the rims of his snowshoes were still on his feet.

I think he must have been robbed of all the metal in his outfit by some wandering Eskimos, who place a high value on anything of that sort. We decided he must have been a white man from the size of his bones, the shape of his head, and the large size of his feet. The Eskimos have very small feet.

The skeleton had not been disturbed by animals or birds and must have lain there for a great many years. The small willows of the country had grown up through the ribs. It is difficult to guess who this lost man might have been. Perhaps he was some sailor from an ice-bound whaling ship, or one of the early Russians who partly explored this country in the early nineteenth century. We left him as we found him.

Before long signs of the early winter began to appear. The water fowl began to leave, and so did the prospectors who had straggled over the country during the summer. It became time for us to build a house.

We made it of sod, ten by twelve on the inside, with walls four feet thick, and a roof of the largest willow poles we could find, covered with a heavy layer of sod. There was a window in the roof, covered with a seal-bladder which we had got from some migratory Eskimos. The door was a framework of willow, covered with a sled-sheet, and with hinges of willow. The floor was dirt. We set up Seagrave's little traveling stove.

One of our reasons for camping by the hot spring

was the size of the willows which gave us our firewood. They were the biggest I ever saw in that country, though even at that the largest were less than two inches in diameter. We also used to cut and boil the new shoots, as you would celery.

The hot spring came out of a bank. It was tepid in temperature and never froze all winter. Though it was our friend in one way, it was our foe in another, as when there was no wind we were enveloped in a perpetual frozen fog, and several inches of frost accumulated on our poor little window every night. In a civilized country frost forms inside a window, but near this hot spring it formed on both sides, making it necessary for us to keep a slush-light burning inside the igloo almost all the time. The days were short enough anyway up there, and if we had known about this fog-freezing business we should have built our igloo farther away.

Our cabin and our cache near by for salmon constituted our entire plant. The dogs, being native bred, lived outside. We had only three dogs between us, two of which belonged to Seagrave. I had lost Ribbon, my leader, from madness the summer before. My only remaining dog was Chinook, a large, half-bred, Mackenzie River Husky, a dog of tremendous power and endurance.

I had got him from a man down in Dawson in '98 who had used him as a one-man's dog. He wouldn't sell him for money, but he traded him for three sacks of flour, worth sixty dollars a sack, and two sacks of

rolled oats, making two hundred dollars in all. He had raised Chinook from a pup, and this was the only dog he had. He claimed that the dog could start a heavier load than any other dog in the Yukon. When this man left me, taking his food with him, he was crying.

I sold Chinook on leaving the country, to pay my board bill, and years afterwards I had a message from the wife of the man I sold him to that she had shot him with her own hands so as to prevent his falling into other hands in his old age. My present leader, Chinook, is named after him.

Winter started in slowly this year, although the days began to shorten very early. When the snow got deep enough to make fairly good sledding, Scotty Smith, one of the men from the camp downstream, and I, decided to make a trip with our dogs to the east. Everything went well on the way over. We crossed one mountain chain, passed our old goose-pasture, and then crossed another mountain chain, working always to the east.

We found nothing of interest, and did little or no prospecting, as everything was frozen up. There was no timber in the country for firewood. Being storm-bound for several days and losing Sullivan, Seagrave's leader, we decided to start on our return trip, as the other dog was almost worthless and all the work was done by Chinook.

The first day we tried to make a forced march. Traveling late, we got lost, and to this day I don't

know exactly what we did. We must have gone a long distance out of our way in the darkness, and as one of those Arctic phenomena, a frozen fog, came up, the stars were obliterated and we had to rely entirely on our compass. This makes going very uncertain, owing to the variation at these latitudes. Also it is difficult to follow with a dog-team a course set by compass, unless you have some point on the horizon to aim at.

Our custom in Alaska was to travel as the old mariners did, by the stars. Locating the North Star, we picked out a star in the direction we wanted to go and traveled toward it. Men traveled a lot by starlight in winter-time, as the days were so short.

This time we couldn't see the stars because of the fog, and do what we could we were lost. Our food giving out, we ate dried salmon, the dogs' food, for two days. After that gave out we had nothing. We were able to make about six hours a day, always poking southeast in the hope of picking up the creek that our igloos were on. This was terribly monotonous, as there is no variation in the tundra — just the everlasting expanse of rolling snow.

We threw away everything except our robes and tent, and a little Primus stove. Then our oil gave out and we threw even the stove away. The first day without food wasn't bad, except for the pangs of hunger. Then we began to get weak. One of our dogs was worthless, and, since Chinook was not a leader, it was difficult to keep the direction. We

took turns in going ahead of them. The man on the handle-bars of the sled was able to hold himself up, but it was hard work for the man ahead, as he had nothing to support himself by and the footing was bad on account of the muskeg, which hadn't got thoroughly filled in with snow. So we were obliged to change places often.

The second and third days a terrific and convulsive throbbing took possession of us whenever we exerted ourselves. We became so dizzy that we were obliged to make frequent stops. To neutralize this throbbing we each took half of the lash-rope of the sled, and drew it as tight as we could around our stomachs. This gave us relief, but our weakness steadily increased.

We could have killed and eaten one of the dogs, and would have done so as a last resort, but had we done this we should have had no dog to pull our tent and robes, one dog being unable to do it in his weakened condition. Raw dog will make a man sick, and we had no fire to cook with. At night we put up our tent, got into our robes, and dreamed about all the good things to eat in the world. Roast turkey tormented me tremendously, and I have never been able to get enough since.

After dark on the third day we struck a deep dry gulch. It was the only thing we had seen for three days to vary the monotony, and we turned down it, hoping it would take us somewhere. We soon found out that it led to our home creek. Striking a sled-

track, we cut the dogs loose, leaving our outfit behind, and in an hour we came out at Smith's igloo.

A man can't stand starvation in this extreme cold as long as he can in the South, and I think one more day would have finished us, especially as a blizzard broke the day after we got back, and raged for several days.

The only bad effect we felt from this experience was from overeating after we got back. Half an hour after we had had a full meal we were as famished as ever, and we kept getting up and eating meal after meal to satisfy our craving.

Shortly after this episode Smith and his partner pulled out, and Seagrave and I were left alone on the tundra. Our lives settled down to a very humdrum affair. Shooting a few ptarmigan, cooking our meals, and trying to sleep were our occupations.

Then the inevitable happened. Two men cannot be left absolutely alone for a great length of time, without one eventually wanting to kill the other. The climax does not come so quickly when men are hard at work or traveling, and this rule does not apply at all when they see other men. In our case the aversion came on gradually, and both of us, being old-timers, knew what was the matter.

First we got talked out. Then we got sick of cards. Then for some fancied grievance or other our outfits were divided. By mutual consent the axe and gun were left outside the cabin. In time matters got

so bad that neither man would make use of the other's fire, but would wait till it burned down before replenishing it from his own woodpile and cooking his own individual food.

The final stage came when we didn't acknowledge that there was another man in the cabin, and there would be only one man on the floor at a time, the other staying in his bunk or going out hunting. Each man watched the other day and night. For instance, if Seagrave turned over in his bunk, just under mine, I was instantly awake to see what he would do next, and if I rolled over I would hear him roll over shortly afterwards, showing that I had the same effect on him. We knew the climax could be expected to come with some slight accident, like a jostle, when nerves would snap and the answer would be instant battle.

To make matters worse with us our food was pretty poor. We had only a hundred and fifty pounds of flour between us for the whole of the time we were there. We eked this out by mixing a third of reindeer moss with it. We tried a mixture of half and half, but couldn't stand it. The balance of our ration was dried salmon and ptarmigan, the latter being the only game at that time in this section. With this we had tea, but no sugar, and a moderate supply of tobacco. To the monotony of this limited diet add the raging storms and the darkness, as the greater part of the day was only twilight, with a slush light made of salmon oil or ptarmigan fat for

our only light, and you have a picture of our life that winter.

The tension, more or less great, continued for six months, and I don't think either of us laughed all that winter. But fortunately the impending climax was averted by the arrival of spring and some prospectors. The first to come was an old-timer in the country. As soon as he saw us he recognized the state of affairs and treated us separately as two distinct units, never bringing us together in any way, either for meals or conversation. We certainly were both glad to see this man. But we tried not to show it, and although the tension was gone we never spoke to each other again.

Two more prospectors came in about this time. Combining my dog with theirs the three of us started for the same country that Scotty Smith and I had been through early in the winter. It was such hard work climbing the divide to get into the goose-pasture, and the snow lay so heavy in the valley beyond, that we cached most of our load there and sent the team back with one man to our last camp. Then the two of us took our snowshoes and worked out about fifteen miles into the goose-pasture to break trail and make it easier going for the dogs.

It was here that I met with another unpleasant adventure. I broke trail out with perfect ease, but when we turned to come back something happened to my legs and they refused to work. I had no control over them, and they were just as likely to go off

to one side as they were to go ahead. My thighs seemed to be completely paralyzed. What this was I don't know, but I suppose it was the effect of the hardships of the winter. I had always boasted that I could walk for twenty-four hours at a pinch, but this certainly took the conceit out of me.

Finding that I couldn't keep up with him, Whitney, my companion, came back and put me ahead. As my condition kept getting worse and worse, he tried to tow me along on a thong, but found he could get me nowhere. As a last resort he tried to make me angry, hoping that this would help my trouble, but even this failed, as I saw what he was trying to do. So he decided to go out and get the dogs and bring me in. His last instructions when he left were that I was not to lie down, under any conditions.

By counting my steps I then tried to go as far as possible before stopping. But I gradually had to reduce these to fifteen at a time because my legs would start going wrong and I had to lie down and rest. By this time I had worked my way bit by bit up the divide. Darkness came on, and as the wind sprang up the soft snow instantly obliterated the trail. I got my compass out and put it in my mitten, but the second time I looked at it, the dial not being luminous, I couldn't read it.

About this time I must have become completely confused by the wind, which had increased to a blizzard. I kept thinking what different men I had heard of had done before they were frozen, feeling

sure that this was my last trip. But for some reason I wasn't in the least frightened. This was probably due to the state I was in.

I know of one man who, before he died, tried to make a fire out of icicles taken from a cliff, and another who curled himself round a stump, was frozen there, and had to be pried loose.

Along about this time I began to imagine things, and thought I saw a figure whirl by me in the blizzard. Then I began to wonder what men would say if I was ever found, and I knew the question would be, 'What did he do last?' This idea haunted me, and I wanted to give them something original to talk about. Believing that the game was up, I took my snowshoes off, put one at my head and one at my feet for gravestones, laid myself down and crossed my arms. I was in no pain, and looked on the whole thing as a joke.

Just then I heard the bark of a dog. I was never so frightened in my life. I was frightened because I was afraid the team wouldn't hear me. Being unable to get up, I rolled over on my side and yelled with all my might, but my words were thrown back in my teeth by the wind. The next thing I knew, the leader was licking at my face. The rest was easy, and I was wrapped in a robe and carried into camp. From that day to this I have had a friendly feeling toward all barking dogs.

I should like to say something here about Bud Whitney, the man who came out for me. He was a

product of the frontier, and a man whom I had known less than forty-eight hours. The blizzard had come on before he got back to camp, and his partner advised him not to try to find me, saying he would only lose his own life in trying to save mine. Whitney's answer was, 'Then you'll have two of us to look for!' Cursing the other man he started out. This the other man told me later.

The only thing Whitney could do in that blizzard was to start his dogs up over the divide, keeping his own head bent down over the handle-bars, and drive into the darkness. The entire team was made up of poor dogs. His leader was a dog who looked like a large spaniel and kept up a perpetual barking. It was this barking that I heard. The first thing that Whitney knew was that the dogs had changed their direction and gone off at a right angle. Being unable to give orders in that wind, he let them go. The next thing the dogs were standing beside me.

At a council that night Whitney and his partner decided to give up the trip, as I was considered to be unlucky in that goose-pasture. My journey back to Nome soon after this was my last trip in Alaska with dogs.

After coming in from the winter on the tundra I found Nome very dull. It was full of people, but there was not much money in circulation. I was sick when I arrived and looked around for some friends I had left there, but couldn't find them. While trying to locate them, I stopped in to see a

saloon-keeper who ran a little joint down by the water-front. He saw my condition, took me in, and put me in a back room, where I remained for a week or ten days. He took complete charge of me, looking after me as if I had been his son. It is extraordinary how a friend will turn up in the most unexpected places when you are most in need of one.

I was busted and was picking up jobs where I could get them. At last I fell into a job of surf-work for a friend of mine. All the capital we required was several dories of different sizes. The work was to take passengers out to the vessels anchored in the roadstead or to bring them in when it was too rough for the lighters, and to load the small coastwise vessels. The steamers lay about three miles out. Behring Sea is very shallow and storms come up quickly there. As there were no conveniences for landing freight or passengers on the beach, it was often a rather difficult business.

The man I was with was great at this game, having had a lot of experience in work of this kind. But, wonder of wonders, he couldn't swim! What generally happened was this: A steamer would arrive with passengers for Nome and would anchor. Then if the surf on shore was too great for the lighters, the surf-men would go out and bring in everybody willing to pay a high enough premium. As the surf often remained high for several days, there were always some people who wanted to be brought in before it moderated.

We never took in more than two at a time, usually not more than one. There were two bars to cross, and the custom was to row straight in, no matter how high the rollers, until we were near the breakers, when the boat was whirled completely around and backed slowly in over the rollers, or was pulled out to meet them as the case might be. The idea was to strike a roller just after it had broken, and go in on the after-wash between the waves. If accomplished successfully, this was a pretty piece of work. If not, the boat was swamped, and the rowers and passengers had to cling to its sides till they were finally washed in.

In these trips the passengers usually showed a great deal of confidence in us as long as the waves remained rollers, as a dory will ride almost any wave. But when the boat was whirled around on the crest, and they sat alone in the stern facing the breakers, and saw the men rowing madly into the teeth of one, it got them. Strange as it may seem, I never saw a woman appear frightened, but we had to threaten some of the men with oars to keep them still.

They say every class of man has his own peculiar brand of charity. Ours was to run stowaways out to the steamers in the latter part of the summer when the nights began to get dark. These were men who were down on their luck and wanted to leave the country. As the season drew near its close there was hardly a night when we didn't run two or three

men out, provided there was a steamer to take them to.

Some of these men climbed up the anchor chains when feasible; some would go up the companionway, with the connivance of members of the crew. We were known, and often went so far as to go on board with some excuse or other and throw a rope over the side, so that the stowaway could climb up after us. I really think that this was more or less winked at by the officers, who knew the conditions in the country.

One day toward the close of the season a man, not a stowaway, came down for me and wanted me to row him to a vessel that was on the point of leaving. He seemed to me a rather nice chap, and I took him out to the steamer and then rowed back to shore. I had just landed when one of the deputy sheriffs, a man I knew very well, asked me to take him out to the steamer, too, and wanted me to wait out there for him.

I had to wait some time, and as a gale began to blow I sent a message to the sheriff asking him to come back at once or I should have to leave him, because the sea was getting very rough. When he did appear, he had in tow the man I had just brought out, handcuffed.

When we finally cut loose from the vessel the wind was blowing so hard offshore that it was cutting the tops of the waves off. It was impossible for me to row these two men alone, so I told the sheriff that

if he wanted to get ashore he would have to take a hand with a pair of oars himself. He took the handcuffs off the prisoner and set him to work bailing, while he and I rowed as hard as we possibly could to prevent our being blown around Cape Nome and out into Norton Sound. The tops of the waves kept blowing into the boat, so it kept the prisoner busy with the bucket. We finally struck shore just above Cape Nome. Another half-mile and we should have been swept around into the open sea. The sheriff and I were both tuckered out, and the prisoner certainly appeared to be.

We were in such a hurry to make a landing in the big sea that the sheriff didn't handcuff his man. When the dory struck the shore, the prisoner dropped his bucket, jumped out over the oars, and went off over the tundra like a deer. The sheriff whirled around and emptied his six-shooter, but was so tired after rowing that he failed to stop the prisoner. I was exhausted myself, but the whole thing struck me so funny that I had to lie back on the sand and laugh. The last I saw of the sheriff, he was tearing after his man, but whether he ever caught him or not I don't know.

I think the funniest thing that happened to us was late that fall when a gambler came down and wanted us to take him out to a vessel where his brother was working. It was dark and the surf was fairly heavy. But with plenty of help we got started, going out with the undertow and striking the last wave just

right. The vessel we were making for was preparing to go to Siberia, and the gambler was in a great hurry to get out to it before it sailed. With two sets of oars we made good time and everything went well.

We reached the vessel just in time, left the gambler at the companionway, and dropped astern, waiting for our passenger to appear for his return trip. After a moment the mate told us we had better start back, because the boat was making ready to go. As the engine started up, our gambler appeared on the companionway, and being in such a hurry to get into the dory he pulled our bow under the platform. A big wave came along just at that time and our dory was pushed completely under. The gambler fell into the stern sheets.

We managed to work her out from under the platform and pushed away before getting mixed up in the screw. But by this time the gambler was pleading with us to put him back, as now he WANTED to get back on board the steamer. One of us lightened the boat by getting out into the water, while the other one bailed with a large bucket. This gave us freeboard enough so that the man in the water could crawl back. Then one man rowed while the other bailed.

The gambler didn't appreciate this performance, as we were rowing all the time to get away from the vessel, and the darkness did not add to his pleasure. He spent most of his time yelling lustily for help to the boat we had left, while we coun-

termanded his requests, much to the enjoyment of the crew. When we got our man ashore, he informed us that he had never been so scared in his life, a matter we were pretty sure of already.

Afterwards I saw him look down the muzzle of a gun with perfect composure. In my opinion there is no such thing as a fearless man. Some men will be brave under certain conditions and some under others, but a really brave man is the man who is frightened but will not let it conquer him. It's like that volunteer for the Civil War whose knees shook under him so that he could hardly write while signing up. 'You may be shaking now,' he said, 'but you'd shake a damn sight harder if you knew where I am taking you!'

Soon after this I left Nome for the States. To economize, three hundred of us went down steerage, which meant being turned loose in the hold where we had to furnish our own bedding. Just before the boat started there was a grand row. How it started I don't know, but everybody struck or kicked everybody else, and as the hold had only one small light in it this may have been the salvation of the small man. It was a whale of a fight, and a good send-off from Alaska. The row continued until they upanchored and the vessel took a quartering course across Behring Sea, which was extremely rough. Thereupon everybody quieted down as if by magic.

Another little incident worthy of mention occurred on the way down. We were playing cards

one evening, on an improvised table in the hold, and four of us were lucky enough to have our game going on under the one electric light. The rest of the players faded off into the darkness on either side, as far as cards could be seen.

We were playing solo, a game in which the dealer is silent. Old Dad, a man who had come into the country at the same time I did, and whom I had kept meeting off and on, was our dealer. Suddenly he announced in a loud voice, 'Boys, I think I've got 'em!'

He unbuttoned the flap of his shirt and carefully examined it. Not finding anything he put his spectacles on the end of his nose. That not being sufficient he lighted the stump of his candle. This still not being enough he took out his little magnifying-glass, which all quartz prospectors carry. That was sufficient. All the games stopped. Most of the crowd could not be seen in the darkness, but all eyes were centered on Dad. That old-timer, with a look of satisfaction on his face, announced to the crowd, 'Boys, I'm lousy as a pet coon!'

Arriving in Seattle, everybody rushed to a furnishing store for a bran-new outfit from top to toe, and then rushed to the bath-house, where everything except memories was washed away.

THE END

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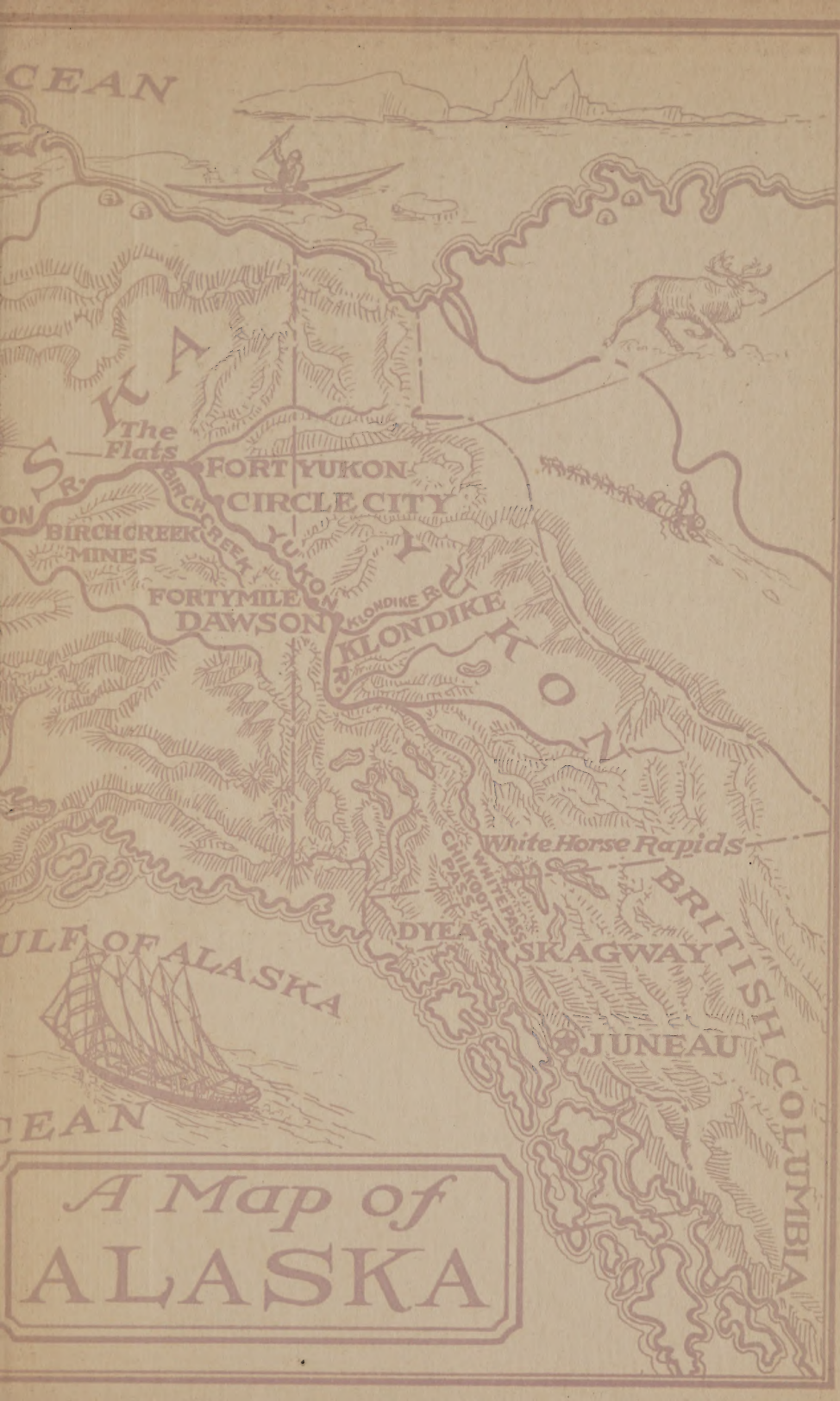
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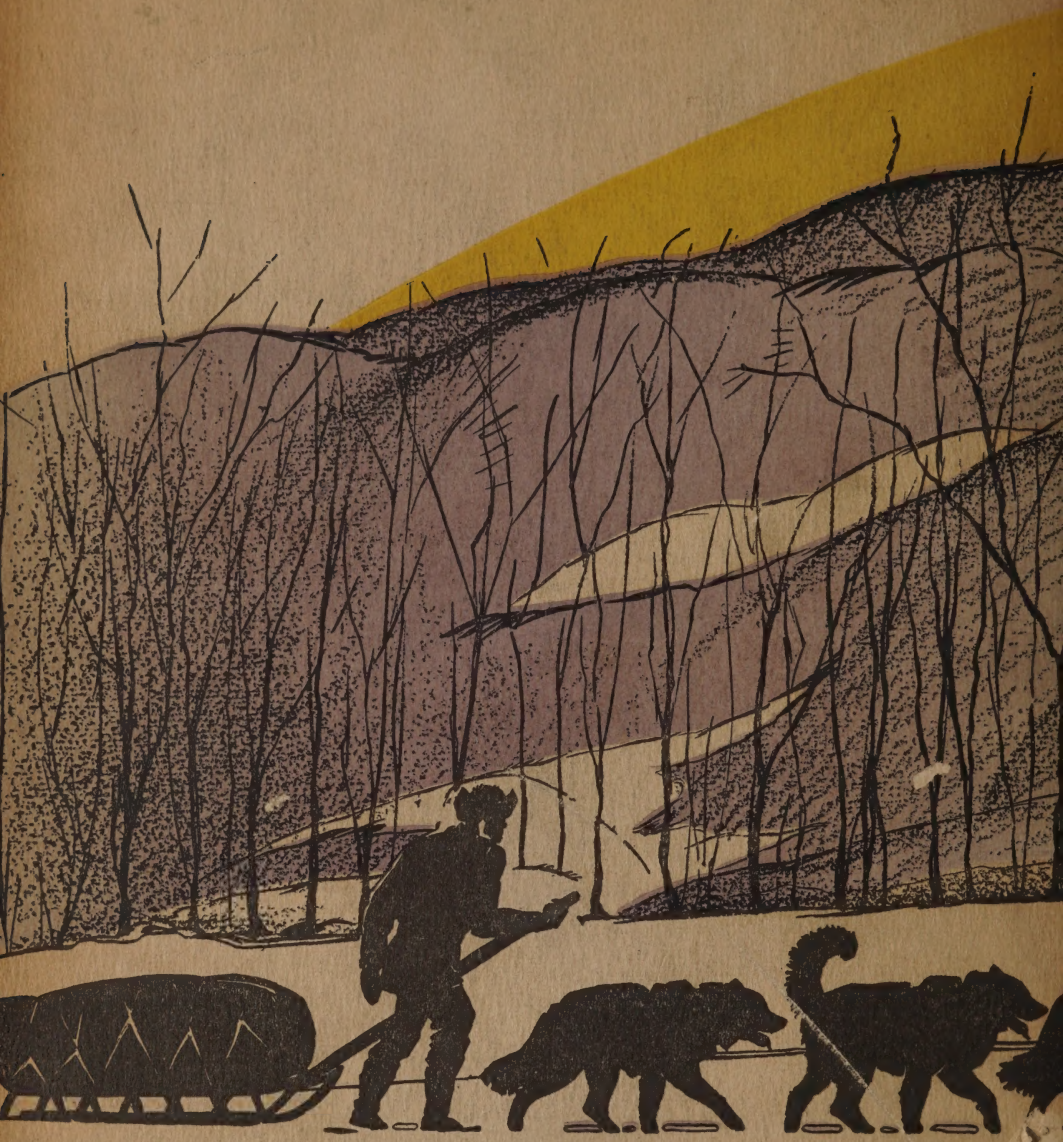

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